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# What's Cookin'?: An Analysis of Food as a Method of Control in the Penal System

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# WHAT'S COOKIN'?: AN ANALYSIS OF FOOD AS A METHOD OF CONTROL IN THE PENAL SYSTEM

by

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ABSTRACT

According to Garland (2001), the U.S. correctional system is a reflection of the culture of control that exists in American society. One way the correctional system exerts control is through food. This concept partnered with Foucault's ideas about the evolution of punishment and the criminal justice system as an institution creates the theoretical foundation for food as a method of control in the correctional system.

Through quantitative and qualitative analysis, this study examined food as a method of control in three southern Mississippi jails in order to understand how food is a contested space for control between jail staff and inmates. After interviewing and surveying inmates and staff, the researcher was able to propose a model in which inmates and staff use food as a method of control, but mostly indirectly. Both inmates and staff use food in order to shape identity. The results of this research can be used to influence correctional food best practices.

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# DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, James and Lisa Livengood. Their never-ending love and support has always inspired me to work hard and push forward.

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# CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

The United States is considered the most penal country in the world. Control is an important part of the prison system, and central to prison administration is the ability to maintain control over prisoners. According to Garland (2001), the U.S. correctional system is a reflection of the culture of control that exists in American society. There are different ways to maintain order and control in prisons and jails including the use of technology, use of force (Marquart, 1986), and through the administration of services such as medical care (Willmott, 1997), exercise (Buckaloo, Krug, & Nelson, 2009; Wagner, McBride, & Crouse, 1999), and diet (Cohen & Taylor, 1979; Foucault, 1977; Godderis, 2006a, 2006b; Johns, Edwards, & Hartwell, 2013; Smith, 2002; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016; Sparks, Bottoms, & Hay, 1996; Sykes, 1958; Ugelvik, 2011; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998; Vanhouche, 2015). These services are critical to the overall maintenance of order in prison. Additionally, the delivery of food, how it is prepared, which foods are cooked, when it is delivered, and how it is delivered all affect inmate behavior (Fishbein & Pease, 1994).

While issues regarding prison food have a history as long as the history of prisons themselves, the details of the issues have changed over time due to the development of different technologies and historical contexts. Prior to the discovery of electricity, jails and prisons found it difficult to store and prepare food for inmates due to a lack of refrigerators, freezers, and microwaves. Because of this, the mishandling of food was common and lead to sickness and death (Craig, Goodwin, & Grennes, 2004). The history of jails and prisons themselves also affected the development of how food was used and

prepared in these settings. There are different eras of prison and jail reform that span decades, and each of these eras are characterized by different reform efforts.

During pre-revolutionary America, jails did not separate offenders, which led to men, women, and children all being kept in the same areas. Some inmates were tethered to the floor by chains while others were housed in cellblocks, but all of those incarcerated had to pay for basic amenities, including a bed and food. This meant that inmates with wealth were more likely to stay in a private room and to be well-fed, and those who were poor had to rely on the charity of others to survive. During this time, it was also common for inmates to die from disease and malnutrition because of the poor conditions of the jails and the lack of amenities offered (Roth, 2011).

In 1790, jail and prison life changed when the first prison reform organization in America, the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, was formed. This society was founded on the ideas of Benjamin Rush. He believed that crimes should be punished privately, prisoners should be classified for housing purposes, participate in self-supporting prison labor, work in gardens for food production (which are currently becoming more popular in prisons), be involved in outdoor exercise, and have access to indeterminate sentences and individualized treatment (Roth, 2011).

Based on these principles, the Walnut Street Jail, a penitentiary in Philadelphia, opened for operation in 1790 (Foucault, 1977; Roth, 2011). This jail, inspired by the Wymondham Prison in England, aspired to reform prisoners instead of punishing them. It also separated its prisoners into their own cells in order for these individuals to be alone to work on their penitence. This is the root of the word “penitentiary.” Inmates were no longer forced to pay for basic services, such as food, because jail administrators were

now being paid a salary and did not need the income that the inmates provided. This mode of operation has been referred to as the Pennsylvania system (Roth, 2011; Rothman, 1990). This system was inspired by English Enlightenment thinkers who were against public humiliation and torture. The Walnut Street Jail was originally praised for its forward-thinking operations, but it quickly became overcrowded and riots ensued (Roth, 2011).

Once the United States officially became a new nation with the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the nation started experiencing rising crime rates. One response to this was to use inmates as laborers, but citizens did not welcome this approach because the sight of prisoners in public space was more of a "spectacle" (Roth, 2011, p. 107) than a treatment method. At this time, prisons were also seen as "schools for crime" (p. 107) because inmates were in a congregate environment in which it was feared that they were learning new ways to commit crime (Rothman, 1990). Because of the learning of new criminal skills, prisons and jails are seen as iatrogenic—they produce more crime (Cullen, 2017).

In order to maintain control over their prisoners, Pittsburgh's Western Penitentiary, built in 1818, utilized Jeremy Bentham's concept of the panopticon. This was characterized by a circular structure in which cells lined the outside and there was a section in the center in which the correctional officers could unknowingly watch inmates. Because inmates were not aware when they were and were not being watched, there was the illusion of surveillance at all times (Bentham, 1791; Roth, 2011). Also with control in mind, the Newgate Prison, built in 1797, started classifying inmates by gender, age, and treatability. Even though this facility was based upon the principles of rehabilitation, it

was not a lasting system and was soon replaced by the Auburn system, with the building of Auburn Prison in 1816 (Roth, 2011).

The Auburn system utilized silence in attempts to put an end to the iatrogenic nature of prisons. Even though the inmates were together during the day, they had to remain silent, even during meal breaks or other fellowship times, or else they would face solitary confinement or military discipline (Roth, 2011; Rothman, 1990). The use of solitary confinement was so prevalent and torturous that 5 of the 83 inmates who were put into solitary confinement in the first year succumbed to death (Roth, 2011). Unfortunately, echoes of this can be seen in modern correctional facilities.

In response to this model, the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, which replaced the Walnut Street Jail, housed inmates in individual large cells, each with a garden and exercise yard. Every cell had heat and running water (Roth, 2011), which was also beneficial for food preparation. Though this was seemingly a more humane method, the lack of contact with other inmates had negative psychological effects on its prisoners, similar to the Auburn system (Roth, 2011).

The next era of prison reform, occurring from 1830-1840, was characterized by the creation of several prison reform organizations, such as the Prison Association of New York and the Massachusetts Society in Aid of Discharged Convicts. This time period, known as the antebellum era, was marked by an increased use in the Auburn system over the Pennsylvania system because the prison administrations used inmates in the labor system in order to increase inmate utility and to reduce costs. The prison systems during this time were harshly criticized by famous activists, such as Dorothea Dix and Charles Dickens. Their actions resulted in corporal punishment being used less

frequently. Though corporal punishment was utilized less often to control inmates, correctional officers started wearing uniforms during this time in order to maintain a controlling atmosphere over the inmates (Roth, 2011).

By the turn of the 20th century, rehabilitation became the priority of jails and prisons as the Irish and Elmira systems were implemented in facilities around the country. The Irish system was based on classification that led to "stages" of incarceration, while the Elmira system focused on indeterminate sentences. Parole followed the implementations of these new systems. Parole focused on education and employment, good-time laws, and more sanitary prison conditions. These changes led the way to better food preparation because the cleanliness of prisons came into focus. This last initiative was on the heels of the convict leasing movement that resulted in numerous inmate deaths. Some reports reported as many as 40% of prisoners died as a result of convict leasing, causing prison labor to become more restrictive (Roth, 2011).

Because of these changes, prisons started acting more like businesses. Prison administrators started promoting parole over corporal punishment because it cut costs. Though probation, parole, and indeterminate sentences were being used to reform inmates, prison factories were also making items for the state, such as furniture and stationary, in order to bring in revenue, much like what occurs now.

In 1891, the first federal prison was opened. The Federal Bureau of Prisons was not created until years later in 1930. At the time of these new advancements, the National Society of Penal Information started collecting data on prison conditions around the country (Roth, 2011). The analysis of this data led to changes in the prison experience, due to a better understanding of prison conditions nationwide.

One of these federal prisons, the Atlanta Penitentiary, started changing the way inmates were being fed. Instead of the long tables with only one side of seating, inmates were served at eight-person, two-sided tables, which allowed inmates to fellowship more easily during mealtimes, leading to less isolation. Though this was a small change, fellowship among inmates had a positive effect on inmate mental health (Roth, 2011; Zalnut, 2013). The Pennsylvania system, which was dedicated to silence, often deteriorated inmates' mental health for this reason. Because of this, Eastern State Penitentiary started feeding inmates in a cafeteria starting in 1924 (Zalnut, 2013). Also during the first half of the century, inmates in solitary confinement were only fed bread and water (Roth, 2011). This was one instance where food was used as punishment in the prison system. During this time, Alcatraz prisoners were served better food in order to offset the punitiveness of the facility (Roth, 2011). These two examples show food as being used as both punishment and as a kind of reward for enduring harsh treatment during the first half of the 20th century.

During the latter half of the 20th century, there was another swing back to the ideals of rehabilitation that was in contrast to the harsher penalties during World War II. After the war, the economy prospered and crime rates decreased, which led to embracing the social sciences and mental health professionals as part of the treatment of inmates. Also during this time, prisoners started becoming more concerned about their civil rights, which led to prisoners suing correctional facilities for basic human rights violations (Roth, 2011). Garland (2001) spoke of these oscillating periods from punitiveness to rehabilitation while he explained the formation of the culture of control.

The Prisoners' Rights Movement of the 1960s, which happened in the shadow of the Civil Rights Movement, was characterized by the United States Supreme Court taking action against constitutional violations of prisoner rights. A plethora of civil rights cases have proceeded through the courts since the 1960s focusing on overcrowding, inmate health care, legal representation, use of prisoners for labor, general prison conditions, and food (Chase, 2015). One example of this is that "jailhouse lawyers" often targeted the amount and condition of their food in the court system. The implementation of the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA), which was passed in 1995, restricted the power of judges and the intervention of the federal government, leaving the prison system with little to no oversight and more control over its own operations (Chase, 2015; Gottschalk, 2015). Even now, the Department of Justice is reluctant to investigate facilities even when there are numerous complaints (Gottschalk, 2015). Over 20 years after the PLRA, the United States prison system is still struggling to maintain control over prisoners.

The treatment ideals of the 1960s lost momentum in the 1970s and led to a return of the just deserts model of corrections that focused on harsh sentences and punishment, not treatment and rehabilitation like in previous decades (Garland, 2001). The loss of faith in the rehabilitative ideal was heavily influenced by a report written by Robert Martinson (1974). Martinson stated that few rehabilitative programs worked and this way of thinking spread to other academics and practitioners. As Martinson's Report (1974) gained popularity among legislators and correctional executives, rehabilitation was utilized less often. Subsequent changes in correctional policies and attitudes led to harsher sentences and the integration of victims into the criminal justice process. During this time Democrats began joining forces with Republicans, which resulted in a

neoliberal agenda that advocated for the eradication of prosecutorial discretion. Neoliberals believed that all those accused should be treated equally under the law. This resulted in a "leaner and meaner" (Gottschalk, 2012, p. 218) criminal justice system.

This shift in correctional ideology created a plethora of effects (Garland, 2001). One side effect of this shift to the just deserts model is the War on Drugs, which was launched in 1971 by President Nixon and is presently active (Alexander, 2012; Garland, 2001; Gottschalk, 2015; Hagan, 2010). Not only was the War on Drugs waged, but shortly after society began to think of offenders as criminals who deserved to be punished. This was such a prevalent attitude that Todd Clear (1994) named this time period "penal harm," in which risk classification, the idea of career criminals, victim's accommodations, and the protection of the community were a priority (Kappeler & Potter, 2017).

This change in attitude toward drugs and punitiveness resulted in the creation of a policy that included severe sentences for crack cocaine possession and sales. Even though crack and cocaine have relatively similar chemical structures, penalties for crack cocaine were 100 times more severe than those for powder cocaine. This law resulted in exponentially more blacks incarcerated on drug charges than whites. Minor possession charges of any drugs have resulted in years of prison time, even for a first offense (Alexander, 2012; Garland, 2001; Gottschalk, 2015; Hagan, 2010).

During the end of the 20$^{th}$ century and the beginning of the 21$^{st}$ century, the prison building boom and the prison privatization movement were in full swing due to the harsh drug penalties. This led to an unprecedented number of people being incarcerated (Alexander, 2012; Roth, 2011). Because of the massive number of inmates filtering in

and out of the system, the private sector were given responsibility for housing inmates in attempts to cut costs.

Private companies also started being utilized in everyday prison operations, such as being responsible for food service (Roth, 2011), which is an easy place for administrators to cut costs. In previous decades inmates were responsible for making and serving the food. Because of the privatization movement, inmates started to only be responsible for the heating of frozen food provided by a private company, such as Aramark, the leading prison food provider of the 21st century. Since the 1980s, inmates were also, once again, used for cheap labor, like in the convict leasing days of the early 1900s. This is a controversial issue that many argue is against the human rights of the inmates (Roth, 2011).

Another development of this time period was the beginning of the use of super-maximum (supermax) prisons. In these facilities, the "worst of the worst" criminals are housed in small cells for up to 23 hours a day with minimal contact (Roth, 2011). Inmates are even served special supermax trays that are designed for security, which are all durable plastic and some are insulated in order to capture heat. These meals are often eaten alone in the inmates' cells, as in earlier days.

Other concerns of the early 2000s were an aging prison population, overcrowding, prison gangs, and the spread of illnesses, such as HIV and AIDS. The spread of diseases is especially telling of prison conditions because it indicates that inmates are sexually active with one another, sharing needles, and are living in general squalor. Some inmates report symptoms of the classic "gaol fever," which was prevalent in the first prisons in recorded history (Roth, 2011). These harsh conditions can range from general

uncleanliness, such as poor food service to the spread of HIV and AIDS. Though these harsh conditions exist, prison administrators strive for safety and security in these overcrowded institutions in order to maintain control of inmates.

One form of gaining control in the prison system is through the control of food (Cohen & Taylor, 1979; Foucault, 1977; Godderis, 2006a, 2006b; Johns, Edwards, & Hartwell, 2013; Smith, 2002; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016; Sparks, Bottoms, & Hay, 1996; Sykes, 1958; Ugelvik, 2011; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998; Vanhouche, 2015). This can be done by either the correctional system or by the inmates. The correctional system chooses when, where, and what inmates eat, but inmates also use food in order to fuel their own *sub rosa* economy. The control of food has an effect on the formation of identity, relationships, resistance, and nutrition in the prison system (Godderis, 2006a, 2 006b; Smith, 2002; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998; Vanhouche, 2015).

This analysis seeks to examine the primary research question: What is the role of food in the correctional system and in the culture of control? Results from the review of relevant research will be used to discuss the policy implications of diet and food provisions in correctional settings. Original data will be collected from various prisons and jails in Mississippi in order to understand the role of food in the Mississippi correctional system.

# CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

## Corrections as an Institution: Penal Welfarism and the Evolving Culture of Control

Each facility that forms the United States correctional system can be considered its own "island," but each of these jails or prisons figuratively come together to form a "carceral archipelago" (Foucault, 1975, p. 297) that works to punish and discipline the offenders for which they are responsible. Because of the relationship between correctional facilities, the correctional system is an institution that oversees the entire correctional process of an offender, which is part of what Gottschalk (2015) calls the "carceral state."

In previous centuries, the correctional institution relied on public humiliation and barbaric methods of torture and execution in order to punish offenders, but in recent centuries the object of punishment is no longer the body of the offender, but the soul/mind (Foucault, 1975). Since the formation of the penitentiary in the 1800s, rather than punishing the body through torture, jail and prison administrators have attempted to rehabilitate the soul by locking inmates into isolated cells so they would face their sins and become penitent of their previous actions. Although the body was no longer the main focus of punishment, some physical punishment was still used, such as the use of a bread and water diet (Foucault, 1975).

Part of this change in punishment style was fueled by the work of reformers and philosophers. For example, famous reformers Bentham and Beccaria advocated for a utility in punishment. They contended that punishment should not be fueled by revenge, but by the use of deterrence and prisoner reform, which was good for society as a whole.

They proposed that if punishment did not prevent future crime that it should not be used (Foucault, 1975).

Discipline is another objective/strategy of the correctional system that aims to transform the mind of inmates. This can include a strict work, meal, and recreational activities schedule that accounts for all parts of the inmates' day. The use of discipline works not only to have total control over inmates but also to create "docile bodies" (Foucault, 1975) that behave in a manner that is acceptable to the facility. Discipline, just as in punishment, should also be corrective in nature in order to prevent future crimes and to reform the offender. Constant surveillance is required in order to assure that inmates are being properly reformed (Foucault, 1975).

With this idea in mind, Bentham (1791) created the concept of the Panopticon, which allowed correctional officers to be able to watch every inmate while the inmate was not able to see the correctional officer. This led to the inmates not knowing when they were and were not being watched, creating a sense of constant supervision (Bentham, 1791; Foucault, 1975). The idea of the Panopticon is not only a prison structure, but a theoretical concept found in experimental, work, educational, and other settings that require unceasing surveillance (Foucault, 1975; Staples, 1997).

The need for supervision throughout the correctional process makes the Panopticon necessary, but it also is what makes the correctional system an institution. The differing facilities and organizations that specialize in incarceration, parole, probation, and mental health work together to supervise offenders and form an institution (Foucault, 1975).

## The Culture of Control

The constant need to supervise offenders has led to a culture of control that is preoccupied with controlling every aspect of offenders' lives and their commission of crimes. This is not only seen in panopticism, but also in present policy, such as the war on drugs and determinate sentences. Garland (2001) stated that the current culture of crime control is based upon a new form of penal-welfarism, a criminology centered upon control, and reasoning that is focused on economics.

At the start of the 20th century, penal-welfarism shifted from a rehabilitation-focused concept to a more punitive model that was risk-focused. Because of this, the protection of the public became more important than helping those that commit crime. Offenders were no longer clients that needed help, but risks that need to be managed. Feeley and Simon (1992) have the same managerial focus and call this approach the "new penology." In the new penology, inmates are dealt with in aggregate form and criminal justice is now focused on efficiency and managing populations instead of rehabilitation. This has led to harsh treatment of offenders in the name of public welfare. To this same end, prison has become a warehouse for criminals, not a place for reform (Garland, 2001).

The shift of focus to risk has not only affected the prison system, but has affected court proceedings (Garland, 2001). The victims' opinion and point of view has become a priority in sentencing, oftentimes leading to harsher sentences and a demonization of the offender. In this new penal-welfarism, showing concern for the offender is seen as disrespecting the victim and the suffering that they endured. This forces offenders into an out-group that needs to be separated from the rest of society: an "us-versus-them"

mentality. As a result of offenders becoming pariahs, they are seen as being undeserving of the help that would be given to other members of society. This creates a culture of "'our' security depends upon 'their' control" (Garland, 2001, p. 182).

A change in criminological approach has also characterized the culture of control. In previous decades, a social welfare model has been the predominant focus of criminology, but in recent years two diverging focuses have been introduced. One of the new forms of thought was a late-modern theory that saw crime as a normal part of everyday interactions. This theory postulated that crime was not a symptom of faulty morals, but the result of day-to-day socialization between people. A second theory that arose and characterized the new culture of crime control was based on old theoretical ideas that some people are simply wicked and abnormal. This approach starkly contrasts the social science and modern approaches of the current criminological age (Garland, 2001).

Though these theories seem fundamentally different, there are some core themes that bring them together. One of these prominent themes is the fact that both of these schools of thought were grounded in a culture of control. The late-modern theory explains that in order prevent crime, the creation of social controls that control peoples' conduct during interactions is imperative. This idea was also reflected in Young's (2007) *Vertigo of Late Modernity* and is found in control theory. The anti-modern theory advocates for exerting control in another way: through moral pressure and the threat of legal action. This approach was more concerned with deterrence and incapacitation (Garland, 2001).

Along with a change in the focus of criminological explanations came a more prominent phase of economic reasoning. For a majority of the 1900s, the crime was seen as a social problem with social solutions, which aligned with the rehabilitative model of this time. In contrast, because of the formation of the culture of control beginning in the 1980's, criminal justice professionals have taken an economic approach to crime control. This approach has caused administrators to rethink how to allocate their resources and operate their facilities from day-to-day. The rethinking of resources, brought on by the new era of economic reasoning, was responsible for a rise in managerialism—a cost-benefit approach often found in the private sector (Garland, 2001).

This shift to managerialism has had an effect on the correctional system that has changed the everyday lives of inmates around the country. The goal of minimizing costs while maximizing security has fueled this trend in operations (Garland, 2001). Prisons are relatively easy places to cut costs because inmates are isolated from the general population, have limited freedoms that put them under the control of the state, and have no power in a capitalistic system (Camplin, 2017).

One relatively easy place to cut costs is correctional food service (Camplin, 2017; Garland, 2001), which can be accomplished by, for example, privatizing the food service of jails and prisons to third party. Many facilities outsource their food preparation, but, according to Camplin (2017), a majority of prisons were responsible for their own food preparation. Though entire facilities can be privatized, many facilities only privatize specific services, such as food production and laundry services (Jing, 2010). Some of the most popular private food providers are Aramark, A'Viands Food and Service

Management, ABL Management, Canteen Correctional Services, and Trinity Services Group (Camplin, 2017; Reutter, 2010).

Prison privatization in general, spurred on by the rise of social control (Feeley, 2002; Jing, 2010) and neoliberalism (Jing, 2010), is a controversial subject that has been prevalent among the criminal justice community for decades, but the privatization of basic services has not received as much criticism (Jing, 2010). Some scholars argue that privatization of facilities are cost efficient, while others have found that there is little evidence to suggest that privatization cuts costs compared to public facilities (Lundahl, Kunz, Brownell, Harris, & Vleet, 2009).

Whether or not the food within a facility is privatized, the lack of universal nutritional standards and oversight in place in correctional facilities has made the inspection of prison food difficult. Every facility, depending on accreditation and governing agency, have different guidelines for food, which makes it difficult for nutritionists and other foodservice providers to create menus for facilities. There is no federal agency responsible for inspecting correctional food service and there is no universal set of guidelines for all correctional facilities. The facility itself is in charge of nutritional standards beyond what is laid out in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (Camplin, 2017). The Department of Justice Food Manual states that the food served must be “adequate” and meet governmental standards (Report no. P4700.06; Camplin, 2017). As long as these few requirements are met and the Eighth Amendment is not violated the food is able to be served. In some cases, county health inspectors oversee food preparation in county jails, but the literature on this topic does not specify whether or not this is true for all county facilities. Jails and prisons usually are not investigated

until a complaint is filed. There is also very little motivation to keep prison food "up to code" because there is not as much incentive as in outside society. In restaurants, licenses can be taken away if health inspections are not passed, but in the correctional system, there are no licenses or specific guidelines (Camplin, 2017). This allows the facilities to have even more unfettered control over inmates through their diet.

## Food and Control

Foodways have both direct and indirect effects on penal systems (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998; Vanhouche, 2015). A foodway is the accumulation of activities related to food, whether cooking, attaining the ingredients, eating, or serving (Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016). Every inmate and various staff members are a part of this network and, depending on their foodway role, have a certain amount of control within the system. Both inmates and correctional officers can utilize these foodways in order to assert control, form identity, form relationships, resist, and manage security risks (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998; Vanhouche, 2015).

### *Correctional system control*

*Formation of identity.* There is an abundance of ways to assert control in the penal system foodway, including the creation of identity. One way that the correctional system does this is by maintaining tight control of what, where, and when inmates can eat. This loss of autonomy is deeply felt by inmates because it serves as a reminder of their identity as prisoners (Camplin, 2017; Godderis, 2006a; Smith, 2002; Minke, 2014; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998; Vanhouche, 2015). Those not incarcerated have an unlimited amount of food choices and are able to eat at their desired time and place. As an inmate, this option

is stripped away and replaced with strict rules and processes. The processes in place and the lack of autonomy not only has effects on inmates' identity, but it also is a constant reminder of the lack of control that they have over their own lives (Camplin, 2017; Cohen & Taylor 1979; Foucalt, 1975; Godderis, 2006a; Minke, 2014; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016; Sparks, Bottoms, & Hay, 1996; Sykes, 1958; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998; Vanhouche, 2015).

Some processes that are applied to the preparation and serving of food have an effect on the quality of food served, which in turn also reminds prisoners of their status (Johns, Edwards, & Hartwell, 2013). For example, some meals are cooked hours ahead of time and placed on carts and served to inmates in different areas of the prison. Because of this process, the quality of food being served is diminished and sometimes creates timing differences that result in cold food and large spans of time between meals (Godderis, 2006a; Johns et al., 2013; Vanhouche, 2015).

The idea of large spans of times between meals is worrisome because meals offer inmates a way to represent the passing of time in their day and their sentence (Smith, 2002; Smoyer, 2015; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998). When there is a long time span between meals, for example between dinner and breakfast, it seems as though time is passing slowly, which could cause inmates to feel restless, bored, anxious, and, not to mention, hungry (Godderis, 2006a, Johns et al., 2013; Smith, 2002). When inmates are fed, the lack of diversity in the meals, eating the same foods consistently, or being served bland food, can also cause the inmate to feel that time is passing slowly.

Another negative effect of serving monotonous and bland meals is that it further segregates those of a minority status. Food served in an institutional setting is made to be

convenient for the masses, so the food has a tendency to cater to those most represented (Johns et al., 2013). Ethnic and religious minorities are not served the food that they are accustomed to, further separating them from their culture (Godderis, 2006a, 2006b; Smith, 2002; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998; Vanhouche, 2015). A process called "othering" (Said, 1978) takes place in which those who do not have a liking for the standard food are marked as different. Food serves as the path for racist comments from inmates and guards that stunt the ability of minority inmates to form an identity centered around their culture (Valentine & Longstaff, 1998). The act of eating cultural foods is embedded during childhood and is one of the most powerful ways to express identity (Visser, 1991). Another byproduct of the institutionalization of food is that during religious holidays, such as Ramadan (Vanhouche, 2015), inmates have little to no control over when or what they can eat. The same can also be true of Catholics during Lent that has dietary restrictions on Fridays.

Another part of the correctional foodway that can set inmates apart from one another is the commissary system. A commissary is a store within jails and prisons in which inmates can purchase items such as snacks, hygiene products, and other necessities. In order to afford items in the commissary, inmates either use funds earned through work in the prison or funds that are provided by family members and friends on the outside (Camplin, 2017; Smoyer, 2015). Therefore, those that have support from family and friends are more likely to receive funds for commissary whereas those inmates with little family support are less likely to have money provided for commissary, making it obvious who has support and who does not. These funds from loved ones act as a gauge for social support (Smoyer, 2015).

The system of commissary not only divides inmates, but it also gives control to the creator (the correctional institution) and to the family and friends of the inmates. This takes control from the inmate. The inmate not only has no choice over the food that is served, he or she also has no control of money that is contributed. Without contribution, the inmate may be left hungry because many inmates complain of not receiving enough food (Camplin, 2017; Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2015). Inmates also rely on funds to purchase supplies such as writing utensils and toiletries that may be important to function in everyday life, especially if toilet paper and feminine products have to be purchased and are not supplied by the institution.

One way that the correctional system can help inmates form a positive identity is by implementing a system in which inmates cook their own meals. In Danish prisons, this type of foodservice has been utilized. In a study of a Danish men's prison, Minke (2014) found that the planning and preparation of meals instilled a feeling of responsibility among inmates. The feeling of being responsible for planning, preparation, and healthy food choices can lead to a shift in identity "from crook to cook" (Minke, 2014).

*Corruption and cutbacks.* The correctional facility not only controls what, when, and how inmates eat, but they also control the funds allocated for food service (Camplin, 2017). Because of this high level of control, corruption is widespread in correctional food service. In many cases, wardens' salaries are directly related to cutting costs, which incentivize the cutting of food costs and other services to the bare minimum. This is problematic for many reasons, including the fact that this can jeopardize inmate health and nutrition, and it is also easy for correctional administrators to not be penalized because there is no oversight or inspection as long as the food and nutrition are

"adequate" (Camplin, 2017). For example, in the early 2000s, then Alabama sheriff Greg Bartlett skimmed $200,000 off the top of his food allocation by feeding inmates repetitive and cheap meals (Camplin, 2017). Inmates filed a lawsuit against Bartlett, which resulted in him being sentenced to jail. Surprisingly, the skimming of the money was legal. The act of not serving "nutritionally adequate" meals was the reason for his incarceration (Camplin, 2017).

Correctional administrators are not the only group receiving criticism for food service corruption. Employees of the private food contractors are often part-time workers that do not make much money and are not often thanked for their services (Camplin, 2017). These disgruntled food service employees have been responsible for bringing contraband, such as drugs, food from the outside, and cell phones into prisons and jails, have had sexual relationships with inmates , and have been implicated in murder crimes in correctional facilities (Camplin, 2017). For example, in Michigan in 2014, an Aramark worker contacted an inmate and instructed him to murder another inmate at the facility, which results in the termination of the contract between Aramark and the state of Michigan (Camplin, 2017; Egan, 2014). Prison food in Michigan has received widespread criticism from inmate advocacy groups and legislators that have introduced legislation to require correctional facilities to be inspected by county officials, similar to the process for restaurants (Camplin, 2017).

In Mississippi, a report released in December of 2017 by the Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) Committee stated that Aramark, the leading provider of privatized food in corrections, did not meet staffing and training requirements set forth by their contract with the Mississippi Department of Corrections (*Clarion-*

*Ledger*, 2018; PEER, 2017). These are just some of the few recent complaints against the company.

Corruption is not the only issue surrounding the prison food controversy. Related to this topic is the fact that cutbacks have been the driving force behind corruption and have left inmates hungry and, oftentimes, sick (Camplin, 2017). Though inmates have filed a myriad of complaints, meat, dairy, and fresh food are being cut from correctional menus around the country in order to cut back on costs and to make meals more standard so that those with special diets can be served the same foods as the general population of inmates (Camplin, 2017).

These cutbacks have not only led to hundreds of thousands of dollars going into the pockets of sheriff's, but have led to hungry inmates that may be served cold food for months, rotten food, food infested with maggots, and so on. Inmates, especially those under the service of Aramark, have complained extensively of portions being cut, kitchen equipment being broken and remaining unfixed, and food that was generally undesirable (Camplin, 2017). Some of the food served had been fed on by rodents, been taken out of the garbage, and food that had spoiled (Camplin, 2017). Other facilities are moving to a model in which inmates are only served food twice a day (Camplin, 2017).

*Food as punishment.* A concept dating back to the birth of the prison is the fact that food can be used for punishment (Camplin, 2017; Foucault, 1975; Barclay, 2014). In the 19$^{th}$ century, this took the form of a bread and water diet used for its lack of taste and monotony (Camplin, 2017; Foucault, 1975). Inmates were put on this diet for being unruly. The modern equivalent for this is Nutraloaf, a brick-like meal that consists of blended food baked into a loaf. Inmates have described Nutraloaf as tasting bland and

having an unappealing texture (Camplin, 2017; Barclay, 2014). Nutraloaf is used as a punishment for inmates that are disorderly during mealtimes or for those offenders that do not have much to lose because of their already lengthy prison sentences (Camplin, 2017; Barclay, 2014). The tastelessness and the monotony of receiving the same meal for days or weeks at a time not only serves as a punishment, but also acts as a deterrent because of how much inmates despise it (Camplin, 2017; Barclay, 2014). Humans require a variety of foods to meet their needs, and the constant serving of the same dish can make prisoners physically ill and lead to the inmate not eating enough calories to maintain their current weight (Barclay, 2014).

Because food is a basic human right, many human rights advocates have inveighed against the use of Nutraloaf (Camplin, 2017; Barclay, 2014; McKinley, 2015). Lawsuits of this kind have been brought to the courts, but because of the lack of government guidance and the fact that inmates are still being served the appropriate amount of calories, the concept of deprivation is still in question. The American Correctional Association, which is responsible for accrediting prisons and forming best practices, has discouraged the use of food as punishment (Camplin, 2017; Barclay, 2014). *The New York Times* (2015) reported on the fact that New York prisons stopped serving Nutraloaf and stated, "…no change may have a more immediate impact on prisoners' moods, and on those of the officers assigned to keep them behind bars, than the end of the so-called disciplinary-sanctioned restricted diet" (McKinley, 2015).

One additional element of the prison-food-as-punishment controversy is the fact that many jail inmates are awaiting trial and have not been found guilty. Even though these people may not have committed a crime, they are still receiving the same food and

food punishments as many of those inmates that have been convicted (Camplin, 2017). This goes against the concept of innocent until proven guilty set forth by The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

*Security.* One ironic part of the prison food controversy in the correctional foodway is the fact that serving good food has been connected with less of a security risk in correctional facilities (Camplin, 2017). Lawrence (2006) explained that there is a direct connection between poor food and violence and disciplinary infractions. Aramark embraces this fact on their website by stating that they "…maintain safe, stable environments for millions of offenders, officers and staff every day." Because of this, it could be inferred that correctional administrators would desire to serve high-quality food in order to placate inmates, but cutbacks leading to poor food quality are still widespread.

Serving bad food has the opposite effect, with some food served in facilities even causing riots. In 2009, a prison in Northpoint, Kentucky was the site of a riot that was caused by inmates that were dissatisfied with the food they were served. At this facility, inmates had incessantly complained about the food served and there were no changes put into place. Sixteen people were injured. Aramark was the food provider at the facility (Camplin, 2017).

Food is not only a motivation for violence, but it can also be used as a tool for violence. In a prison in Indonesia, inmates used juice of hot peppers to incapacitate the correctional officers while trying to escape. Prisoners also use Jolly Ranchers, a popular hard candy, as makeshift shives in order to harm correctional officers or other inmates (Camplin, 2017).

Utensils can also be used as a tool for violence. The food itself is not only seen as a security measure, but the utensils provided to the inmates are also seen a security risk. An example of this is the trays served to inmates in supermax prisons. Companies advertise these trays as being able to retain heat, durable, and having deep compartments for "hearty portions" (Plastocon). Plastocon, a correctional food service tray provider, also advertises plastic silverware by saying, "Keep your inmates safe with virtually unbreakable plastic cutlery from Plastocon." These examples are just a taste of how inmates can use food to assert control in the correctional system and how correctional facilities are trying to combat this control.

*Inmate control*

*Taking control of identity.* In the prison setting, it is likely that the institution will have a role in shaping identities of inmates because of its position of power, but inmates also hold a role in creating their own identity behind bars. This is an important factor because the creation of a positive identity that is not tied to criminal activity has been linked with desistance of crime (Smoyer, 2014). For example, a female inmate taking on the role of a mother may be more likely to desist criminal activity (Cobbina, 2010; Opsal, 2012; Smoyer, 2014; Visher & O'Connell, 2012). A cognitive transformation takes place during this process of shifting identities and occurs when inmates replace their old identity with a new one (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002; Maruna, 2001; Opsal, 2012; Smoyer, 2014). This can be difficult when certain conditions are not available to form a new, crime-free identity (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002; Maruna, 2001; Opsal, 2012; Smoyer, 2014).

Foodways are an important part of the identity-shaping process and inmates often use this to their advantage when trying to control their creation of a new, positive identity, even though the system sometimes usurps this control (Smoyer, 2014). Because of their status in the foodway, inmates can try to frame themselves as having positive attributes. If an inmate works in the kitchen and smuggles food for someone that is hungry, that inmate may see him or herself as "good" (Smoyer, 2014, p. 529) and "caring," (p. 529) even though the behavior is technically against regulation. Instead of attaching a "rule-breaking" (p. 530) aspect to identity, the individual can choose to see him or herself in a different way.

Inmates can also choose to see themselves as "healthy" (p. 529). Even though the food in prison is not usually of a healthy variety (Johns et al., 2013), inmates can pick and choose what to eat in order to feel healthy and to transform into a new identity (Smoyer, 2014). Some inmates see this as part of their rehabilitation and try to reach this feeling either by illicit or lawful means. If an inmate works in the kitchen or has a positive relationship with someone that does, the individual will have more access to the foods they desire and may be able to use different cooking methods to prepare the food (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016).

Another identity that inmates try to construct is one in which they are smart and courageous (Ugelvik, 2011). Not only do inmates hoard and smuggle food, but they may even inform correctional staff that they need a Kosher diet or another diet in which they receive better food. Since there are little ways for staff to know if someone is telling the truth, many inmates can receive these special meals even if they are not of the correct

demographic (Camplin, 2017). Zeveloff (2012) estimates that only one in six of those requesting Kosher meals are Jewish.

The act of inmates hoarding, smuggling, and besting the correctional officers not only puts the inmate back in control, but it also proves to themselves that they are brave and smart enough to deceive staff, yet it is another example of inmates justifying illicit acts in order to form positive identity traits. This breaking of the rules to reinvent themselves illustrates a vehicle in which inmates can take control of their identity in the penal system (Godderis, 2006a, 2006b; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016).

*Forming relationships.* Foodways can be helpful in the formation of identity, but they can also aid in forming relationships between inmates. Food is the major principle for which groups form in prison (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016; Vanhouche, 2015). The goals of these groups can be to hoard, smuggle, cook, and distribute food to others. This type of behavior may form a sub rosa economy within the prison system (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998), which will be examined later in this analysis. This act of forming a food group that is centered upon illicit means acts as a way for inmates to take control of the system in which they are bound.

One function of these food groups can be for inmates to become more knowledgeable about food and cooking (Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998). This can be used not only to further oneself, but also serves as a way to gain respect from other inmates that may benefit from these new skills. In a prison setting, it is important to cook in groups in order to reach full potential because different individuals bring different skills and cooking methods to the table, quite literally in this

context. Participating in a cooking group may also serve as a way to help other inmates feel included and to not feel as though they are "outcasts" (Smoyer, 2015, p. 31).

One way to become a member of a cooking group is by status (Smoyer, 2015, 2016). If an inmate works in the kitchen in a prison they have access to cooking equipment, food, and may have positive relationships with certain correctional officers that will allow for some illicit behaviors (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016). Inmates may also be considered to have a high status if they can cook, whether it is someone who has been in the system for a long period of time and has experience or someone that has entered the system with knowledge of how to cook (Smoyer, 2016).

The fact that inmates form relationships through foodways is important because it gives them a common ground to organize and a way to socialize with those individuals in which they may not have any other common connections (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016). These groups allow inmates to problem-solve, work together as a team, and learn new skills, albeit some illegitimate ones. It also has the added benefit of inmates being able to form their own identity through food preparation and to be able to form friendships that may make prison life seem less dreary (Godderis, 2006a, Smoyer, 2014).

*Resistance and role reversal.* As alluded to above, food has the ability to be divisive and to be representative of who holds power in a given situation and setting (Godderis, 2006a; Smith, 2002). In a prison setting, control can either be held by the institutions, which are mostly represented by correctional officers, or by inmates. One method in which inmates can change the identity or control forced upon them by the

correctional system is through resistance (Godderis, 2006; Rowe, 2011; Smith, 2002, Smoyer, 2014; Thomas, 2008; Ugelvik, 2011; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998).

Though there is much deliberation about what constitutes resistance, some resistance can be described as everyday activities that are disobedient and cause punishment or other negative reverberation from those in power, which in turn challenges power and control (Bosworth & Carrabine, 2001; Vanhouche, 2015). Others believe that resistance must be intentional and political (Rubin, 2014). Acts such as these can range in size from being large-scale, prison-wide actions to discrete events in which the correctional system is not aware. Displays of resistance can also take place on individual and group levels.

### *Individual Resistance*

An example of individual-level resistance within the correctional food way would be an inmate having an altercation with a correctional officer. This often happens in the kitchen or cafeteria and is a way for inmates to show discontent verbally to the correctional officers (Godderis, 2006a; Smith, 2002). Confrontation is not only expressed verbally, but it was also expressed through physical means, such as tray smashing and plate throwing (Godderis, 2006a; Smith, 2002; Smoyer, 2016).

More discrete forms of individual resistance exist. One example is refusing food, and inmates may have different reasons for doing so. A motive behind an inmate refusing food could be to receive individual attention from correctional officers. If an inmate is depressed, being bullied, or having some other personal crisis, refusing food can alarm a correctional officer and get the inmate the help that he or she needs (Valentine & Longstaff, 1998).

A second reason for refusing food is to be able to stay in the cellblock during mealtimes. From the outside, this may seem like an undesirable thing to do, but if an individual receives commissary or uses other means of obtaining food, the inmate chooses where they eat, when they eat, and how much they get to eat, illustrating an opposition to the entire correctional food network (Smoyer, 2016). This can be done either individually or in a group and depends on the inmate's social support system on the outside. Someone that does not have a support system is not likely to have the means to acquire food through commissary (Smoyer, 2016).

Another individual display of opposition can be characterized by an inmate starting a rumor that food has been contaminated, whether by spit, urine, or other means. This form of resistance is strongest when inmates are responsible for cooking for correctional officers. The dynamic of control in this situation is extremely delicate and just the rumor itself is enough to cause inmates to perceive their power in this type of situation. In this type of situation, the inmates are able to make a decision and have some control over correctional officers' perceived health and well-being (Godderis, 2006a). In a Canadian prison, a rumor such as this caused the correctional officers to stop eating food made by inmates and changed the method of cooking. Instead of making two separate batches, one for inmates and one for correctional officers, the staff decided to have the inmates prepare one batch and separate immediately before serving (Godderis, 2006a). This is an example of role reversal, in which the correctional officers' control is traded out and replaced by inmate control.

"Cognitive tricks" (Godderis, 2006a, p. 259) and "food fantasies" (Valentine & Longstaff, 1998, p. 139) can also be used by inmates to quell hunger in order to show

resistance to food policies in place in the institution (Smoyer, 2016). Inmates can pretend that they are eating something else or spending time with their families through this method. Valentine and Longstaff (1998) even go so far as to say that food fantasies occur at the same frequency as sexual fantasies in the prison system. These fantasies allow inmates to take control of their minds in order to individually resist their conditions.

Another individual method of resistance involves the inmates taking control of their bodies. One way that this can be done is by limiting food consumption (Smoyer, 2016). Even though it is uncomfortable, it serves as a reminder to the inmate that they have control over their own bodies, at least to a certain extent. Inmates also decide to consume different types of food in order to show resistance. Inmates can challenge the correctional system's promotion of healthy eating by choosing to eat fatty, unhealthy foods (Vanhouche, 2015). This form of obstinance likely goes unnoticed by guards but is still a representation of autonomy and control to the inmate.

Inmates can also use their bodies in order to smuggle and hoard food from the cafeteria and kitchen areas. (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016). By doing this, inmates can stock up their cells in order to cook their own food and form cooking groups. They can also control what, when, and where they eat in order to create some autonomy (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016). In one women's prison, inmates reported smuggling food in their bras and panties. Due to safeguards against sexual assault at the facility, the guards were not permitted to search these areas of the body. By doing this, women were transforming safeguarded body parts into a vehicle for resistance (Smoyer, 2016). This action contributed to another instance of role reversal, in which the inmates

are considered victims and the correctional officers are seen as perpetrators (Smoyer, 2016).

These smuggled kitchen ingredients can also be used in order to make pruno—prison wine. Individuals or groups of inmates can use the tank of their toilets in their cell in order to combine fruits, sugar, and yeast that ferment and create pruno (Camplin, 2017). This can either be used solely by the person that made the beverage or can be bartered.

### *Group Resistance*

Inmates can also take part in resistance in a group setting by taking control of the correctional foodway (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2016; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998). One form of group resistance is illicit cooking groups, which was examined in a previous section. These groups allow inmates to form relationships and identities, but they also serve as a vehicle of resistance because cooking groups are not permitted by the facility, and the methods in which to access food for these groups is illegitimate, as well (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2016). These cooking groups allow inmates to resist by creating ethnic dishes. The consumption of cultural foods not only serves as a way to sustain identity, but it is also a form of resistance because the inmates are challenging the homogeny of the institution (Godderis, 2006a).

Cooking groups use two methods to resist institutional control: rule-breaking and repurposing (Smoyer, 2016). Inmates participate in rule-breaking when they cook in their cells. This is against institutional policy and it is characterized by the use of everyday household items to cook and prepare foods, such as trash bags, radiators, and hair dryers which are also considered repurposed items. Repurposing takes place when bland foods

are transformed into a new dish when certain spices and extra ingredients are added (Smoyer, 2016).

Inmates can also resist in groups by choosing not to consume food (Smoyer, 2016; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998). When a group decides to perform a hunger strike it takes on a new meaning than when an individual decides to starve oneself. In an individual instance, the inmate may want correctional officer's attention for a personal issue, as stated above, but a group that forms a hunger strike has a broader political message and may even receive publicity (Valentine & Longstaff, 1998). Riots can be used as a tactic for resistance in a similar manner (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2016).

*Control over other inmates and the sub rosa economy.* Not only do inmates assert control over the institution, but they can also have control over other inmates (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014; Valentine & Longstaff). If an inmate has access to food he or she can usurp that control in order to swindle other inmates. Some ways to have access to food is through commissary, prison employment, and smuggling. If an inmate accrues food they can use it as a resource either to barter or to monopolize (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014, Valentine & Longstaff, 1998).

Bartering in the prison forms a sub rosa economy that Valentine and Longstaff (1998) refer to as a "black economy" (p. 143) that gives all the power to those that have the most resources, in this case, food. Food can be used to trade for cigarettes, phone cards, and drugs. Whenever these resources are scarce the person with a particular commodity acquires a monopoly and may trade resources at any price he or she chooses (Camplin, 2017; Vanhouche, 2015; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998). This, in turn, takes

advantage of other inmates for personal gain, though not all transactions are negative in the foodway between inmates (Camplin, 2017).

The same can be said for those who work in the kitchen. These inmates are in a unique position because they have the potential to have unfettered access to a resource that is very valuable in a prison setting. These inmates can choose who they trade with and at what price, giving them an advantage. They can also do such favors as sneaking extra plates of food and giving certain inmates bigger portions (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014), which would make these inmates a vital part of the foodway.

*Nutrition*

Another important aspect of the foodway system is nutrition. Like other parts of foodways, nutrition can either be controlled by the correctional system or the inmate. Food is a central part of this issue because it is usually used as the gauge for health (Smith, 2002). The correctional facility controls what is brought into the prison and what is served, but the inmate can choose to purchase commissary or decide to take part in a cooking group that hoards and smuggles ingredients and ultimately, decides what is consumed (Eves & Gesch, 2003; Firth, Sazie, Hedberg, Drach, & Maher, 2015; Smith, 2002).

An important aspect of nutrition is weight gain and loss. Prisoners often report either losing or gaining weight during incarceration (Smoyer, 2014; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998). This can be caused by not eating enough, especially those that do not receive funds for commissary, or by not having healthy food choices. One inmate reported her healthiest food choices were fruit-based desserts and other items high in calories (Smoyer, 2014). A lack of exercise can lead to weight gain and other adverse

side effects such as skin condition, change in pallor, and bowel issues like diarrhea or constipation (Valentine & Longstaff, 1998).

Weight gain and loss can be a nuanced topic when referring to prison populations. Many inmates did not lead healthy lifestyles before incarceration, which could lead to inmates either gaining or losing weight simply due to a having a meal schedule (Hannan-Jones & Capra, 2016). Some inmates may be underweight due to substance use and some may be overweight due to poor food choices or a low availability of healthy foods. Experiences with former jail inmates during 2016 have shown that weight gain and loss could also be attributed to certain foods served at the facility, such as the over-availability of desserts and carbohydrates that help facilities meet the caloric guidelines that are in place.

The correctional system has the responsibility to provide a balanced diet for inmates, which is an important role because healthy food has the ability to promote a healthy lifestyle that can last upon release (Smith, 2002), leading to fewer doctor's visits and a burgeoning self-esteem, which is an important part of rehabilitation and reentry. Health care is an integral part of this process (Gideon, 2013).

Another important part of rehabilitation and reentry is cognitive functioning of inmates. Though there is little research related directly to inmates, studies of nutrition in school-aged children linked to academic performance have posited that an unhealthy diet is directly related to lower cognitive (Gao, Scott, Falcon, Wilde, & Tucker, 2009) academic performance (Burrow, Goldman, Olson, Byrne, & Coventry, 2017; Correa-Burrows, Burrows, Blanco, Reyes, & Gahagan, 2016). According to these studies, foods that are dense in energy, low in fiber, foods high in fat, and high-sugar foods weaken

academic performance (Burrows et al., 2017; Correa-Burrows et al., 2016). Even though these studies focus on children, this information can be applied to inmates who may be in work programs, academic programs, or counseling programs. In order to foster a positive, rehabilitation-focused environment, correctional administrators need to offer healthy, safe foods that will give inmates their best chance of desistance.

Food safety is another important element of nutrition. A 2017 CDC study found that inmates are over six times more likely to suffer from a food-related illness compared to the general public (Marlow, Luna-Gierke, Griffin, & Vieira, 2017), and is seen as a "hidden public-health crisis" (Fassler & Brown, 2017, para. 3). The reason for this is not completely clear because every correctional facility has a different mode of operation. One cause of this rate of illness is that many of those inmates and workers in the kitchen are not properly trained in food preparation (Fassler & Brown, 2017). For those facilities with a private company responsible for food preparation, this becomes more complicated because in some cases the food contractor and the facility have not been clear who is responsible for training those handling the food. Since food is seen as a priority in security, food preparation often comes in second (Fassler & Brown, 2017; Marlow et al., 2017).

Official food preparation is not the only cause for illness concern. Inmates that smuggle food back to their cells and make food on their own are also at risk for illness because they either do not handle the food properly or do not cook it properly. This is not hard to believe since inmates do not have refrigerators and proper appliances for cooking in their cells. Pruno is especially dangerous for inmates when not made properly because of the bacteria that can result from the fermentation process. Pruno is thought to be the

cause of approximately one-quarter of illness outbreaks from contraband food (Fassler & Brown, 2017; Marlow et al., 2017).

Nutrition is important in the rehabilitation process because it can have an effect on concentration, alertness, and attitude. If an inmate is not learning at his or her full capacity, the individual's rehabilitation has the potential to suffer because they are not participating fully in programming that targets job skills, parenting, education, and other aspects of training for everyday life outside of prison. A myriad of nutrition facts can be at the center of emerging policy that aims to better the prison experience (Gideon, 2013; Godderis, 2006a; Smith, 2002; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998; Vanhouche, 2015).

## Preliminary Conclusions and Research Questions

The research question guiding this analysis is: what is the role of food in the correctional system and in the culture of control? This question was answered through the examination of present and past research detailing the specific roles of food in prison life. Food can be used as a control mechanism by the correctional system and the inmates. The attainment of food can aid in shaping identity, forming relationships, resistance, and serve to nourish the bodies of inmates (Godderis, 2006a, 2006b; Smith, 2002; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998; Vanhouche, 2015).

An important motif found throughout the literature is that food may be a contested space for control, but this is not directly addressed. Food is most commonly seen as a way for correctional institutions to maintain control over inmates, but inmates have the opportunity to smuggle food (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016), form cooking groups (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998;

Vanhouche, 2015), refuse food (Smoyer, 2016; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998), buy from the commissary (Camplin, 2017; Godderis, 2006a; Smith, 2002; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998), and inmates even use food and utensils as tools of violence against correctional staff and one another (Camplin, 2017). Correctional staff members control what inmates eat from meal to meal (not just what they eat, but the number of calories that need to be consumed, when they eat, and who they eat with) and use food as a punishment (Nutraloaf is one of these forms). This metaphorical fight over the use of food not only affects the relationship between correctional staff and inmates, but it also affects the day-to-day lives of inmates.

This research not only addresses these elements of food in a correctional setting, but it also bridges a gap in the literature. Shaping identity, forming relationships, and resistance are addressed in other research studies, but few studies exist where these are all discussed. The current research also aims to not only examine inmate perception of food, but also correctional staff, which is often ignored. By examining both staff and inmate perceptions, it will be possible to understand how food is not only seen, but also how food is a contested space for control. This study also aims to examine the differences of food perception based on ethnicity, gender, age, number of years incarcerated, and the participant's status in the prison (inmate or staff).

Future research suggestions from the existing literature also support this research. Smoyer (2015) suggested that there needs to be a greater understanding of how the use of food can be used to change inmate experience and relationships during incarceration and after. Gideon (2013) suggested an entire research agenda that aims to study best practices relating to crime and health. With these suggestions in mind, the researcher has created

research questions that aim to form a greater understanding of the role of food in the correctional system and how this relates to inmate health and experience.

# CHAPTER III – METHODS

In order to assess the concept of food as a contested space for control, the researcher decided to use both qualitative and quantitative data. Since the researcher was given access to local jails, it was feasible to conduct semi-structured interviews and give questionnaires to both staff and inmates. This method was chosen because the surveys were able to capture the perceptions of a larger group of individuals, while semi-structured interviews would allow the researcher to expand upon the questions asked in the questionnaires in order to extract more detail about certain topics of interest.

## Setting

A purposive sample of various southern Mississippi jails was used as the setting for this regional research. Facilities were chosen based on their geographical location in order for the researcher to better understand the correctional food served in southern Mississippi. In order to gain access to facilities, jail and prison administrators of southern Mississippi counties were emailed, and an introduction letter was attached that explained the research and data collection needs (the letter sent to correctional facilities and the Institutional Review Board acceptance letter can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively). Three facilities elected to participate in the research. Those administrators that agreed to participate were asked to provide a letter stating that they consented to participation.

## Participants

The participants of this study consisted of inmates and correctional staff at the three correctional facilities that participated in data collection. The jail administrators allowed all inmates that wanted to participate to do so, except for those that had violent

offenses, but the researcher informed the administrators that it was ideal for all inmates who were willing to participate be permitted to do so. The researcher directly disseminated surveys and conducted the interviews. Inmates did not receive any benefits from participation, such as being able to opt out of work detail or other preferential treatment. All correctional staff and inmates that chose/were permitted to participate in the study were included in data collection. All inmates and staff were required to sign a consent form before being allowed to participate and were informed that they could opt-out of participation at any time without repercussion. All inmates were over the age of 18 because only adult facilities were sampled. Both male and female staff and inmates were sampled.

## Data Collection

### *Staff*

The staff members that chose to participate in this study were given a questionnaire and had the opportunity to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher. The 19-item questionnaire took approximately five minutes to complete, and the interviews took approximately fifteen minutes to complete, depending on the answers given. The staff survey instrument included demographic information, items relating to perceptions of food service, perception of use of food in the facility, and use of food as punishment and control. A Likert scale was used to capture survey responses.

### *Inmates*

The survey instrument for inmates included items related to demographic information, general perceptions of food service, food habits, and food as punishment and control with a total of 39 items. A Likert scale was used to record participants' responses.

Inmates were also given the opportunity to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher. Table 1 provides more detail of the topics that were covered in the questionnaires and interviews for both staff and inmates.

Table 1

*Topics Covered in Surveys and Interviews*

| Topic | Inmates (# of questions) | Staff (# of questions) |
|---|---|---|
| Identity and culture | 6 | 0 |
| Health and nutrition | 8 | 3 |
| Food as punishment and control | 3 | 6 |
| Food as currency | 3 | 0 |
| Food as contraband | 1 | 2 |
| Enjoyment of food | 1 | 2 |
| Choice and rights | 1 | 2 |
| Make own food | 1 | 0 |
| Commissary | 2 | 0 |
| Food service | 0 | 4 |
| Would eat food | 0 | 1 |

## Data Analysis

### *Qualitative Data*

The analysis of the qualitative data was based on the principles of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)—an approach rooted in inductive reasoning in which the researcher simultaneously codes and collects data in order to form categories that help the researcher to understand the data. Semi-structured interviews with correctional staff

members and inmates were transcribed and then coded. Coding is a process in which the researcher identifies different themes in the transcripts and attaches a label to the theme, such as “lack of choice” or “direct punishment,” and multiple codes can be applied to the same piece of text. At the end of the coding process, the researcher can reanalyze the transcripts and see which pieces of the transcripts are related to one another. The program ATLAS.ti was used to code and analyze the interview transcripts. Once the data was uploaded into ATLAS.ti, the transcriptions were initially coded. After the first round of coding, the transcripts were recoded, adding in codes that were created later in the process and applying them to earlier transcriptions.

Once the coding process was completed, code groups were formed by combining codes that were related to one another. An example of this would be the combination of codes such as “amount of food” and “bland” to create the code group “inadequate food.” These code groups were used to create networks that detailed how different codes and concepts were interrelated. Memos were used during the transcribing, coding, and analysis processes in order to document gaps in the codes, thoughts on relationships between codes and variables, and hypotheses, which were influenced by the continual recoding and reconsideration of relationships between variables. These lower-level concepts were then analyzed in order to create a higher-level concept that suggests a theory.

Grounded theory was chosen as the method of analyzing the qualitative data because it allowed the researcher to approach the data with a systematic approach, but also with an open mind. While collecting and analyzing data, the researcher identified recurring motifs across interviews and formed a theory driven by these motifs. Grounded

theory allowed the researcher to form a new theory based on the analysis of data (Charmaz, 2014). By employing the methods of grounded theory, the goal of this research project was to create a theory that explains the perception of the role of food in the correctional system by inmates and staff.

*Quantitative Data*

The questionnaires resulted in quantitative data. The independent variables of the quantitative data were ethnicity, gender, age, whether or not the participant was a staff member or an inmate, number of years incarcerated (inmates), how much correctional experience the subject had (staff), and previous work in food preparation (inmates). The dependent variables were the participants' perception of inmate and correctional control in regards to food. Before analyzing the quantitative data, the researcher cleaned the data set by looking for mistakes and no cases were deleted.

Once the surveys were completed exploratory factor analyses with a varimax rotation were conducted in order to determine if any survey questions measured similar concepts and could be used to construct scales (Table 3). Exploratory factor analysis is a technique that is used to group items together based on component factor loadings. Those with highest factor loadings in the same component measure similar concepts present in the survey. This method was used to construct the scales because a basis for scale construction did not exist since the concept of food as a contested space for control is a new theory created by the researcher. Eigenvalue and factor loadings were the criteria used for scale construction. Only eigenvalues over one were used to create components. All survey questions were included in the first round of factor analysis.

Linear regression was then used to determine which independent variables were predictors of correctional and inmate control. The purpose of linear regression is to explain causal relationships of variables in order to make predictions about dependent variables. Regression calculates the correlation between independent and dependent variables in order to determine how much of the dependent variable is included in the independent variable. Linear regression was chosen because the dependent variables tested were continuous instead of categorical (Mertler & Reinhart, 2017). Linear regression was not conducted on the staff data because of the low response rate of the questionnaire.

With the combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses, the researcher was able to better understand the existing relationships between participant demographics and their perceptions of inmate and correctional control in relation to food. This data can be used to construct a theory that details how food is used by inmates and staff and what this means in the world of corrections and the broader area of criminal justice.

# CHAPTER IV - RESULTS

## Quantitative Multivariate Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed for frequencies and descriptive statistics in order to describe the population sampled. The sampling resulted in 66 completed inmate surveys and 18 completed staff surveys. Questionnaires were also coded in order to supplement the information provided in the semi-structured interviews. Survey instruments were coded according to a "food as punishment and control scale" (FPCS) created by the researcher.

Table 2

*Sample Demographics*

| | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| **Staff Members:** | | |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 7 | 10.6 |
| Female | 3 | 4.5 |
| Missing | 8 | 12.1 |
| Ethnicity | | |
| White | 12 | 18.2 |
| African-American | 5 | 7.6 |
| Hispanic | 1 | 1.5 |
| Other | 0 | 0 |
| Missing | 0 | 0 |
| Age | | |
| 19-29 | 4 | 6.1 |
| 30-39 | 3 | 4.5 |
| 40-49 | 1 | 1.5 |
| 50-55 | 2 | 3.0 |
| Missing | 8 | 12.1 |
| Correctional experience | | |
| Less than 1 year | 2 | 3.0 |
| 1-5 years | 9 | 13.6 |
| 6-10 years | 4 | 6.1 |
| More than 10 years | 3 | 4.5 |
| Missing | 0 | 0 |
| **Inmates:** | | |

(Table 2 Continued)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 49 | 74.2 |
| Female | 12 | 18.2 |
| Missing | 5 | 7.6 |
| Ethnicity | | |
| White | 42 | 63.6 |
| African-American | 18 | 27.3 |
| Hispanic | 1 | 1.5 |
| Other | 3 | 4.5 |
| Missing | 2 | 3.0 |
| Age | | |
| 19-29 | 18 | 27.3 |
| 30-39 | 25 | 37.9 |
| 40-49 | 17 | 25.8 |
| 50-55 | 5 | 7.6 |
| Missing | 1 | 1.5 |
| Length of time at current facility | | |
| One month or less | 19 | 28.8 |
| 2-5 months | 23 | 34.8 |
| 6 months-1 year | 18 | 27.3 |
| Over 1 year | 1 | 1.5 |
| Over 2 years | 2 | 3.0 |
| Missing | 3 | 4.5 |
| Total time of incarceration | | |
| Less than a year | 12 | 18.2 |
| 1-5 years | 28 | 42.4 |
| 6-10 years | 16 | 24.3 |
| More than 10 years | 4 | 6.0 |
| Missing | 6 | 9.0 |
| Number of facilities* | | |
| 1 | 9 | 13.6 |
| 2-5 | 37 | 56.1 |
| 6-10 | 12 | 18.2 |
| Over 10 | 2 | 3.0 |
| Missing | 6 | 9.0 |

*Number of facilities was not included in analysis because of issues with collinearity

The exploratory factor analysis that utilized the survey data yielded nine components: food perception and correctional control, making food and inmate control,

health and fulfillment, commissary, fulfillment and needs, hiding food, identity and inmate control, enjoyment and change, and trade.

Table 3

*Component Loadings*

| | Loadings |
|---|---|
| **Component 1: Food perception and correctional control** | |
| The food I am served is prepared properly. | .770 |
| The food I am served is safe to eat. | .804 |
| I recognize food at this facility from my life outside. | .653 |
| The food served is normal to me. | .626 |
| I feel like I'm being punished when I'm served foods I don't like. * | .572 |
| I see the food served in this facility as being part of my punishment. * | .733 |
| I feel that correctional staff has too much control over what I eat.* | .723 |
| Correctional staff use food to punish me. * | .693 |
| When I receive a disciplinary infraction, the food I receive is altered in some way. * | .643 |
| Sometimes I refuse to eat the food served to me. * | .668 |
| **Component 2: Making food and inmate control** | |
| I make my own food in my cell.* | .835 |
| I make food with other inmates (not in the kitchen).* | .885 |
| If applicable, when I make my own food and/or buy food f | .806 |

(Table 3 Continued)

| | |
|---|---|
| from commissary, I feel more in control.* | |
| **Component 3: Health and fulfillment** | |
| I get a say in what I eat while incarcerated. | .602 |
| After eating a meal, I am full. | .603 |
| I am healthier since being incarcerated. | .734 |
| I have gained weight since being incarcerated. | .773 |
| **Component 4: Commissary** | |
| My family and/or friends send me money for commissary items.* | .748 |
| I eat snacks from commissary.* | .871 |
| **Component 5: Fulfillment and needs** | |
| The food I receive while incarcerated meets my dietary needs. | .529 |
| I am often hungry between meals. * | .777 |
| Sometimes I think about and crave foods from the outside. * | .549 |
| **Component 6: Hiding food** | |
| I hide food in my cell that I'm not supposed to have.* | .793 |
| If applicable, when I hide food from staff I feel like I'm in control.* | .874 |
| **Component 7: Identity and inmate control** | |
| If applicable, when I trade food for other items with | .593 |

| | |
|---|---|
| inmates I feel like I have control over those inmates.* | |
| (Table 3 Continued) | |
| When I eat certain foods I feel more like myself.* | .522 |
| Food served at this facility reflects my upbringing.* | .853 |
| **Component 8: Enjoyment and change** | |
| I enjoy eating the food I am served while incarcerated. | .502 |
| The food has changed since I've been incarcerated. | .811 |
| **Component 9: Trade** | |
| I trade food with other inmates.* | .764 |

*Reverse-coded items

In order to create representative and reliable scales, reliability analyses were conducted. The items in Component 1: Food perception and control, Component 3: Health and fulfillment, Component 5: Fulfillment and needs, and Component 8: Enjoyment and change all related to the concept of correctional control, as discussed in the literature. When these components were combined to create an additive scale that yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .855. The other components created during the factor analysis (Component 2: Making food and inmate control, Component 4: Commissary, Component 6: Hiding food, Component 7: Identity and inmate control, and Component 9: Trade) related to the concept of inmate control. This scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .761. The scores of the components of the respective scales were added together to create the values of the inmate and correctional control scales. Table 5 below includes the

descriptive statistics for inmate scale scores. Correctional staff scores were not included due to the insufficient amount of survey responses from this sample group.

Table 4

*Scale Descriptives for Inmate Sample*

| | Correctional control scale | Inmate control scale |
|---|---|---|
| Minimum | 33 | 11 |
| Maximum | 84 | 49 |
| Mean | 59.5714 | 34.3509 |

The linear regression model (see Table 5 below) that tested for whether age, gender, ethnicity, correctional food preparation experience, length of time at current facility, and total time of incarceration predicted correctional control yielded no significant findings. In the final regression model that tested for predictors of inmate control, both length of time at the current facility (p=.021) and total time of incarceration (p=.019) were predictive of inmate perceptions of control with both variables suggesting increases in time were related to increased feelings of control when controlling for age, gender, ethnicity, and correctional food experience.

Table 5

*Coefficients for Final Inmate Control Model*

| | *B* | *β* | *t* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | .030 | .037 | .253 |
| Gender | -1.411 | -.082 | -.579 |
| Ethnicity | -1.167 | -.078 | -.524 |
| Correctional food preparation experience | 1.679 | .118 | .751 |
| Length of time at current facility | .397 | .387 | 2.400* |
| Total time of incarceration | .057 | .377 | 2.439[1]* |

[1] $R^2_{adj}$=.176, F=2.668

*Significance at the $p$<.05 level

## Qualitative Analysis

Once data collection was completed, 21 inmates and 7 staff members had participated in the interviews. Demographic information of the interviewees can be found in Table 6 below.

Table 6

*Interview Demographics*

| | Number of interviews |
|---|---|
| **Inmate:** | |
| Male | 17 |
| Female | 4 |
| White | 15 |
| African-American | 4 |
| Hispanic | 1 |
| Other | 1 |
| | |
| **Correctional staff:** | |
| Male | 5 |
| Female* | 2 |
| White | 5 |
| African American | 2 |
| Hispanic | 0 |
| Other | 0 |

*There were no interviews with minority female inmates

After completing the first round of coding for the interview data, there were 195 individual codes. A second round of coding was conducted in which the researcher reanalyzed the transcripts, which ultimately yielded 210 codes. The codes that measured similar themes throughout the data and literature were combined to create 15 code groups. Some codes were found in multiple code groups while others were not included in any of the code groups because of a lack of prevalence in the data. The code groups were used to create networks in order to understand how the different concepts connect to

one another. The list of code groups with their respective codes can be found in Table 7 below.

Table 7

*Code Groups for Interview Data*

| Code Group | Codes Included |
|---|---|
| Choice | Inmates shouldn't get a choice, Lack of choice |
| Commissary/Canteen | Canteen expensive, Commissary, Commissary is a necessity, Likes canteen company, Provide own food, Ramen, Take commissary as punishment |
| Control, Trade, Commissary/Canteen | Control over staff, Controlled environment, Correctional control, Correctional control over weight gain, Dependence, Food as control, Food can control inmates, Food shouldn't be used to control inmates, Inmates control over inmates, Inmates control over inmates, Nutraloaf as control, Price gouging |
| Cooking Groups | Bricolage, Cooking and togetherness, Cooking groups, Cooking resources, Form cooking groups out of hunger, No cooking resources, Provide own food, Staff ignorant to cooking groups |
| Correctional Control | Altered food for medical purposes, Amount of food, Bad meal rotation, Budget, Canteen expensive, Controlled environment, Correctional control, Correctional control over weight gain, End of food contract is bad, Everyone is treated the same, Food as a reward, Food as an incentive, Food as an incentive not to act out, Food as an indirect punishment, Food as control, Food as direct punishment, Food can control inmates, Frugality of the system, Go by |

| | |
|---|---|
| (Table 7 Continued) | regulation, Good meal rotation, Guidelines meet needs, |
| | Hygiene/sanitation, Incarceration is about money, Inmates don't have food rights, Inmates shouldn't get choice, Lack of choice, Lack of energy, Lack of fresh food, Lack of protein, Lack of variety, Lacking nutrition, Loss of culture, Loss of identity, Loss of individualism, Monotony, No cooking resources, No ethnic food, Nutraloaf as control, Nutraloaf given in the hole, Prison vs. jail, Punishment meals, Take commissary as punishment, Unaware of what ingredients are served |
| Cravings | Cravings, Fried foods in relation to craving, Missing fresh food |
| Culture | Cultural/local food, Culture doesn't affect view of food, Fried foods in relation to culture, Held onto culture, Hold onto culture, Individualism and culture, Loss of culture, Religion and culture, Unrepresentative food, Very American |
| Enjoyment/Satisfaction | Adding variety, Food is adequate, Likes the food |
| Food as punishment | Against food as punishment, Can't use food as punishment, Familiar with Nutraloaf, Feelings from Nutraloaf, Food as an indirect punishment, Food as a direct punishment, Food as punishment, Food as punishment isn't worth the consequences, Food shouldn't' be used as punishment, Grue, Punishment meals, Punitive mindset, Slop, Take commissary as punishment, Tried Nutraloaf |
| Hunger | Amount of food, Boredom more than hunger, Commissary is a necessity, Exercise in relation to hunger, Form |

| | |
|---|---|
| (Table 7 Continued) | cooking groups out of hunger, Giving food to others who need it, Hungry, Insufficient calories, Insufficient food, Rationing food, Regulations aren't enough, Smuggling out of hunger |
| Identity | Held onto identity, Hold onto identity, Identity, Loss of identity, Religion and identity |
| Inadequate Food | Amount of food, Bad meal rotation, Bad/no texture, Bland, Complaints about the food, Days old food, Doesn't like food, End of food contract is bad, Excess starches, Food doesn't taste good, Food looks unappetizing, Gross, Inadequate food, Insufficient calories, Insufficient food, Just water to drink, Lack of fresh food, Lack of protein, Lack of variety, Lacking nutrition, Monotony, No meat for breakfast, Not enough salt/seasoning, Only processed meats, Processed foods, Unsafe food, Would change food |
| Individuality | Held onto individualism, Individualism and culture, Individualism related to behavior, Individuality, Loss of individualism, Treated like a person |
| Inmate Control | Adding variety, Bricolage, Control over staff, Cooking groups, Dependence, Detached from incarceration, Doesn't eat, Fair trade, Food as control, Held onto culture, Held onto identity, Held onto individualism, Hold onto culture, Hold onto identity, Inmates control over inmates, Price gouging, Regaining control, Smuggling out of hunger, Sneaking trays, Trading food for coffee |

| | |
|---|---|
| Nutrition/Sanitation | Days old food, Different utensils for every meal, Excess starches, Food is adequate, Food is safe, Food meet needs, Go by regulation, Guidelines meet needs, |
| (Table 7 Continued) | |
| | Hygiene/sanitation, Inadequate food, Insufficient calories, Insufficient food, Lack of fresh food, Lack of protein, |
| | Lacking nutrition, Only processed meats, Pruno, Sufficient calories |
| Trade | Dependence, Food as currency, Food can control inmates, Giving food to other that need it, Inmates control over inmates, Giving food to others that need it, Inmates control over inmates, Ramen, Trading food for coffee |
| Variety | Adding variety, Bricolage, Commissary as a necessity, Cooking groups, Cravings, Good meal rotation, Lack of variety, Monotony |

*Inmate Responses*

Once the interview data was analyzed using ATLAS.ti, a clear distinction was found between correctional and inmate control similar to what was found in the quantitative data during scale construction. The only overlapping code was "food as control" (this can be seen in Table 7 and in Appendix G). When the different elements of control were analyzed, the researcher found that out of 21 interviews with inmates, 16 inmates reported feeling a loss of individualism (Appendix H) and 5 reported feeling a loss of identity (Appendix I). Many participants that reported that the way food was prepared and delivered helped them in holding onto their culture and identity stated that it

was because they felt like they were being "treated like a person" by correctional staff. Those in the trustee program and other inmates that reported seeing themselves as well-behaved perceived that their good behavior has helped them hold onto their individualism because they are treated better by correctional staff. Some also reported being strong-willed as a personal trait that was helpful to hold onto their identity.

Forming relationships and asserting some control over the food they eat can also help inmates hold onto their identity (Godderis, 2006a, Smoyer, 2014). Due to a lack of choice and variety, inmate interviewees spoke about forming relationships with one another by trading food and making their own food together. One inmate stated,

> It's—in prison maybe because the food they feed you is so crappy, but in here we do, you just to like, you know, you got guys that don't have nobody, that don't make canteen so we'll get together and make meals just so everybody eats. It's just a kind of more of a family thing than it is a lock up issue.

According to the interview data, many of these relationships are mutualistic symbiotic relationships in which fare trade occurs and each person contributes equally. Many inmate interviewees used the phrase, "a fair trade ain't no swindle." However, there are some instances in which some inmates will price gouge others because they have what the other person needs. For example,

> …When people have canteen or have food or, the leverage they get is the fact knowing that you're gonna have to come to them or be at their beck and call. I don't know what kind of leverage it has other than, I don't know. I mean, there's, it's really strange in jail, you have a, the longer you've been here the higher up

> you are, you know what I mean like, so it's like a tier thing and you know if you get canteen people look up to you…

Those incarcerated can also become dependent on things such as coffee and other canteen items due to receiving little help from those in the free world.

Personal and familial finances are important when inmates want commissary items, but correctional finances directly control what food the inmates are served on their trays. When inmates were interviewed, 2 of them brought up finances as being a large part of the corrections system, particularly when making decisions. One inmate directly related cost to the subject of food by stating,

> No, I personally know a lot of guys have all the this food's horrible and it's just you're in jail, you know what I'm saying. They're on a very strict budget for a certain amount per plate and you get what they can afford. It's kind of how I see it, you know."

The inmate spoke about budget and food both explained that the inmates cannot have more rights to food than they already have because of costs and feasibility.

Correctional control and financing has also had an effect on inmate interviewees' perceptions of nutrition and sanitation. Some of the concerns mentioned by inmates are the fact that they only receive processed meats, they only have one cup and spork the entire time of their incarceration, they receive excess starches, they do not get enough calories, they do not get enough food, they do not get enough fresh food, and a there is lack of protein.

Another facet of correctional food that was mentioned was complaints about correctional food, which was hard to ignore. Some questions were asked about inmates'

perceptions of the food and most inmates (and some staff members) had recommendations about how to improve the food. Some of the common complaints were a lack of choice, a lack of variety (eating the same thing over and over again), small amount of food, lack of flavor, no meat for breakfast, and overall quality. Amount of food was found to be the inmates' biggest complaint. On the other hand, there were some inmates that expressed that they really like the food. For some of the facilities food is provided by local restaurants, which may be the reason this facility's food was more enjoyable.

*Correctional Staff Responses*

During the interviews, both correctional officers and staff expressed the thought that the lack of choice that the inmates have in what they are fed is "to let [them] know that [they're] in jail." When asked if inmates had rights in regards to food, a correctional staff member stated that,

> Not really because then at that point I feel like everybody, it would just get taken, it would be out of control and it would just be whatever they wanted and you're spending way more money on that and all that kind of stuff.[1]

This quote directly mentions the reason for a lack of choice is related to budgetary constraint. This idea was also found in some inmate responses, as mentioned above.

Some correctional staff interviewees stated that the food meets regulations, but they believe the regulations should require more calories. At a facility that only offers two meals a day a correctional staff member was adamant about the fact that he believes

[1] The phrase "you know" was deleted multiple times from this quotation for readability purposes.

that the facility needs to offer three meals a day. Correctional staff interviewees at one facility also spoke about how the private companies that cater to their facilities start to provide lower amounts of food and food that is poor in quality when they are nearing the end of their contract. This is supported by the existing correctional food literature that criticizes private food providers (Camplin, 2017). It was also mentioned that at one facility inmates are not fed any sort of fruit because of a fear that they will make it into pruno—jailhouse wine that is known to cause a vast majority of food-borne illnesses in correctional facilities (Fassler & Brown, 2017; Marlow et al., 2

# CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION

The results of the factor analysis of the quantitative data supported the hypothesis that control can be broken down into two types: correctional and inmate control. Even though age, gender, ethnicity, correctional food preparation experience, length of time at current facility, and total time of incarceration were not found to be significant predictors of correctional control, it is still supported by the qualitative data. Choosing different independent variables in future correctional control analyses may yield different results, especially if more participants from more diverse backgrounds are included in the study.

At the beginning of the research process it was hypothesized that the inmates that had been incarcerated for longer periods of time felt that they had less control over their lives, but the final regression model and the qualitative data support the opposite conclusion: the longer an inmate has been incarcerated the more likely it is that he or she feels like they have some control. One idea that arose from inmate interviews that supports this is the notion that the longer you are incarcerated the higher up in the hierarchy that you are. Being high on this hierarchy may include gaining the respect of other inmates, which may aid in forming beneficial relationships with other inmates or correctional staff. One inmate stated,

> If you come in here you are able you can certainly have a lot of control over people around you because they, you know, are all hungry and they want food or they need minutes on their phone and so you can facilitate that and then they treat you differently.

Even though this conclusion is different than expected it makes sense that those with experience in incarceration would have figured out ways to use food to feel like they

had some control over their situation. It can also be implied that those that have been incarcerated for longer periods of time would be more likely to have knowledge of how to trade with other inmates and at what cost, how to make food items from commissary (including recipes and cooking methods), and how to work with others to achieve this goal.

Murguía (2018) applies the term bricolage to describe the action of creating meals from a variety of food items that are available to inmates. This includes the innovative use of food items, such as Ramen noodles and snack cakes, and the methods for making food, like using flowing hot tap water to warm up food. Multiple participants described this in the interviews. One participant described his method of cooking food by stating,

> I think very wasteful in any manner of speaking the way we have to heat food now. Noodles is a big commissary item, like the ramen noodles, and the only way to heat that is to put them in the bowl and get hot water in the bowl and leave the bowl in the sink with the hot water continually running over it.

Murguía (2018) explained that the act of modifying food in this way could be a form of resistance that inmates use to "modify the expectations of institution personnel" (p. 69) (Godderis, 2006; Rowe, 2011; Smith, 2002, Smoyer, 2014; Thomas, 2008; Ugelvik, 2011; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998). Even though inmates' use of bricolage was found to be widespread, many of the participants provided explanations for different motivations than those presented by Murguía (2018). Instead of being directly motivated by wanting to take control from correctional staff most participants stated that they use bricolage in order to create some variety in their diet or to add food so that they will not be hungry. One inmate applied the use of commissary to his own life by explaining that "you can

only work out so much to keep your physical composure because I work physical labor for twenty years and you can't work out enough without being extremely hungry…if you don't make commissary."

When inmates and staff were asked about the control dynamic related to bricolage, only a few inmates stated that food was used to control staff. When asked if he felt that making food gave him control over staff, one inmate stated, "Not correctional officers, it's all inmate related." This dynamic of inmates controlling other inmates is seen throughout the interviews, especially when answering questions about trade and dependence. Those inmates that receive commissary can take advantage of the inmates that do not because they have access to things that are restricted to others (another way for people to be higher up on the hierarchy that gives inmates control). Because commissary is the only way to receive food items that are not part of meals, those that do not receive commissary have to trade things they have, sometimes the food on their tray, for items such as coffee, Ramen noodles, phone minutes, and hygiene products. Because of this dependence on the people that have commissary funds, those with commissary can price gouge other inmates and have some control over them. These findings are supported by the literature that addresses the sub rosa economy among inmates (Camplin, 2017; Vanhouche, 2015; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998). Some participants also explained that trading is often not predatory in this manner. Many people facilitate fair trades and even give food to other inmates that do not have extra food, which is considered a necessity for those incarcerated.

It is interesting that the *sub rosa* economy thrives in the commissary system. The correctional food literature explains that commissary allows the correctional institutions

and families to have control because they are the providers of commissary (Camplin, 2017), but the results of this study indicate that inmates' control over other inmates also operates within this system. These different parties each have control in this system depending upon on how it is used, whether it be price gouging another inmate, a correctional administrator taking away commissary for punishment, or a family member that refuses to supply commissary funds. This is a direct example of food as a contested space of control among all of these groups.

When staff members were asked if they felt like they had less control over inmates who made their own food, all of them answered that it did not affect the level of control that they felt they had over inmates. In fact, one correctional officer stated that he thought cooking groups were beneficial to inmates because they learn to work together and cooperate when making food together. This account contrasts with much of the literature on this topic that state that the creation of cooking groups is a form of inmates taking control from correctional staff by creating their own food and resisting correctional control (Godderis, 2006; Rowe, 2011; Smith, 2002, Smoyer, 2014; Thomas, 2008; Ugelvik, 2011; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998), but the literature also mentions that working together to make food is part of cooking groups as well (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014).

Another reason correctional staff may not feel threatened by cooking groups is that the sample facilities' rules in regards to food were not strict. All inmates in these facilities are fed in their cells and commissary items are allowed in their cells. The only rules against food are that they cannot leave commissary items unsealed due to pest control. In one of the facilities sampled, correctional staff would help inmates warm up

food in microwaves and give them access to boiling water to make noodles and other food items. Even though making food and cooking groups was not seen as against the rules at these facilities, other facilities with varying rules and philosophies in regards to inmate freedoms may give different answers to these questions.

The practice of trading with other inmates and forming cooking groups enables inmates to form relationships with one another. This process of forming relationships is important because many inmates that were interviewed reported that forming relationships with those in their cellblock helped them feel like they held onto their identity and culture, which supports the existing literature (Godderis, 2006a; Smoyer, 2014, 2015, 2016). Since inmates only interact with inmates in their cellblock (unless they are on work detail), trading and forming cooking groups is an action that brings people closer together. One inmate described the purpose of cooking groups as "people coming together." Cooking and togetherness was directly mentioned in 3 interviews. One inmate who was going to be released soon after the interview took place stated, "Me and two of the other guys are leaving in the next week or so what we're doing is we're pooling everything together and we're making like this big pizza, and it's gonna be fun." This quote not only illustrates that food is used as a way to come together, but also to celebrate.

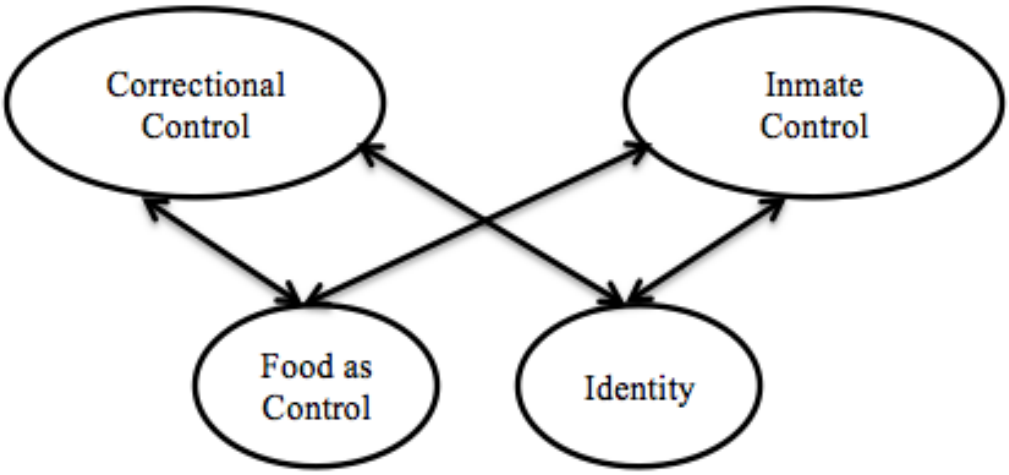
Another way inmates reported holding onto their identity is being treated well by staff. When asked about holding onto cultural identity one inmate stated, "Well see like some of the officers here how they talk to you, they don't treat you like inmates." Another inmate said, "Yeah, I think that it's interactive in that if you [unintelligible] treat you like just another inmate whereas if you're very respectful, you know, non-aggressive,

then they treat you like you, just like a regular person." Multiple participants made the argument that the way inmates behave can directly be related to their treatment by staff implying that holding onto their identity and being treated like a "regular person" is within the inmate's scope of control. Inmates reported that feelings of individualism are also directly related to how they are treated by staff members. One inmate stated, "I think it's just because it's smaller here and they treat you like an individual, but I know more people on a personal level." Participants also cited access to religious services and materials as a way to hold onto or feel a lack of cultural identity. The access of Bibles to Christian inmates led many people to feel like themselves, while a lack of religious diversity, such as only one kind of religious service, has led to some inmates feeling a lack of cultural identity.

The idea that staff treatment has an effect on an inmate's ability to hold onto cultural identity and individualism shows that the correctional system has control over that as well, not just those that feel a loss of identity. Higher level correctional staff also control what food is served and religious materials and personnel are allowed into the facility, which are other ways that inmates feel like they can hold onto their identity. The facility even controls the inmates that are around each other by forming cellblocks, limiting the relationships that can be formed through socialization, trading, and cooking groups. This may undermine the idea that inmates that have been in the system longer actually have more control. They may perceive that they have control, but they may be more influenced by the system than they think.

The idea of identity in this setting is imperative to food as a contested space for control because it is one of the only variables that connect both inmate and correctional control (shown in Figure 1 below), meaning that correctional staff and inmates use their resources (whether directly or indirectly) in order to influence inmate identity and as a way to assert their control. The results from this analysis indicate that concepts of food as control and identity can be used by the system and by inmates in order to gain and maintain control over inmates.

Figure 1. Inmate and Correctional Control Connections



Though inmates do not always seem to be aware of the types of controls the facility has over them in this analysis, inmates did seem to think that food is either used as direct or indirect punishment. Many of the inmates and staff stated that the food was just part of the punishment, to let inmates know that they are in jail and not in the free world. Many of the inmates accepted that part of being in jail is a loss of personal freedom and choice. This lack of choice and variety leads inmates to have food fantasies in which they crave foods from the outside. The research literature explains that these "cognitive tricks" (Godderis, 2006a, p. 259) are used as a form of resistance in order for inmates to enjoy foods that they cannot have (Valentine & Longstaff, 1998), but the responses from the inmates in this analysis suggest that these cravings are not intentional and remind inmates of their status. Some inmates reported having to look away from the TV when commercials from restaurants aired.

Few of the inmates and staff interviewees felt that having a lack of choice was a direct punishment. Inmates and staff seemed to understand the fact that because of budgetary constraints and loss of personal freedom the food is the way it is, even though most inmates had complaints about the food in regards to amount, texture, taste, lack of variety, and lack of seasoning.

This indirect form of punishment can be explained by theories such as Feeley and Simon's (1992) new penology and Garland's (2001) research on managerialism which are ideas that focus on understanding the effects aggregating inmates and efficiently operating correctional systems. If inmates are just seen as numbers (which many participants feel that they are), then those operating the correctional system and deciding what food to serve do not take into account anything except for cost, which is supported

by the fact that correctional staff participants mentioned budget as being a large part of the reason inmates do not get better food or a choice in what they are served. This suggests that identity, individualism, and inmate control were not factors in deciding how food was delivered for the inmates in this analysis.

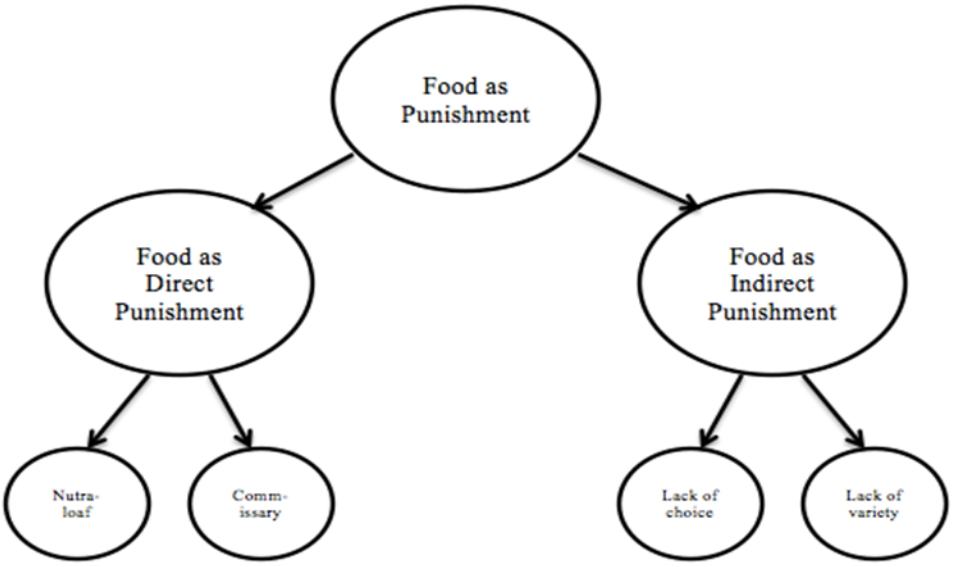
On the other hand, when inmates were asked about Nutraloaf[2], they identified it as being a more direct form of punishment. After participants were asked if they believed food was ever used as punishment, one inmate stated, "Like I know my county jail like they give you something called Loaf." Nutraloaf had not been mentioned in the interview prior to this statement meaning the inmate independently recognized Nutraloaf as a form of punishment. Many inmates and staff reported being familiar with Nutraloaf, but every participant stated that the facilities where data was collected did not serve Nutraloaf. Inmates did report that other facilities in Mississippi and other states did use Nutraloaf as a punishment. These reported locations included prisons and jails. Other food as punishment items were mentioned, such as the use of "grue," "slop," or "vegetable plates." The different forms of food as punishment are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Nutraloaf was used as a method of control according to an inmate. When asked about Nutraloaf, he stated, "It's a mind thing. Get you to act right," while other inmates provided evidence that Nutraloaf may not be as controlling as it is intended to be. This supports Foucault's (1975) idea that punishment of inmate's has transitioned from punishing the body to punishing the mind. One inmate reported these feelings about being served Nutraloaf:

[2] A brick-like meal that consists of blended food baked into a loaf (as mentioned in the literature review)

> Yeah, you know, and really it gives you, gave you fuel to be combative, to fight against them and not, not, not be in compliance with the rules. And then you take them, take [unintelligible] what friends I do have in the system and isolating me

Figure 2. Food as Punishment




> here by myself with no touch with the outside world or other inmates and things that put on the emotional side and then it gets down to how strong-minded of a person you are… it makes you angry and combative and makes you really you have no reason to try to better yourself or try to follow the rules and guidelines in here, you know, [unintelligible] including my meals.

Nutraloaf can be used to play mind games with inmates, make them feel like they have less control and be an incentive to behave in order to stop receiving Nutraloaf, which demonstrates that Nutraloaf can be used as a deterrent. But on the other hand, Nutraloaf can also cause more aggression and fuel combativeness, which does not go along with the

current punitive model that wishes to mitigate risk in the culture of control (Garland, 2001).

Food is often a source of discontent in prisons and jails, which can lead to rioting or acting out (Camplin, 2017) as well as interpersonal issues among inmates and staff. Inmates that are aggressive and combative can pose a risk to correctional officers. In this respect, food can be used by the correctional system and inmates in order to send their own messages to one another (the staff wanting the inmate to behave and the inmate refusing to do so). This is another example of how food can be a contested space for control.

Many inmates and staff members were familiar with Nutraloaf, but there were also some participants that did not know what Nutraloaf was. This was made obvious when the researcher would ask questions about Nutraloaf and the subject would either ask what it is or would incorrectly describe it. Out of those that were familiar with Nutraloaf many were not served it but they just knew someone who had been served it. This was surprising because much of the literature on prison food focuses on the use of Nutraloaf (Camplin, 2017; Barclay, 2014; McKinley, 2015). Before the interviews began, it was hypothesized that a vast majority of inmates would be familiar with Nutraloaf, but as the interview and coding processes ended it was clear that among the sample population Nutraloaf (and food as direct punishment) was not part of many survey respondents correctional experiences.

One theme that was prevalent throughout the interviews in relation to Nutraloaf and other topics is that inmates were very fixated on whether or not they are treated “like

humans." The same inmate that spoke about Nutraloaf causing aggression also stated that it was like the correctional system was

> …taking away the identity of the human being, it's like you're treating me like a dog or a wild animal. And they should be punished for that. They should be made to eat that, you know 'cause we're human beings. Most of us are not violent offenders. Most of us have families and jobs and we—to an extent we were productive citizens in the community. We broke laws, but ninety percent of Americans break every day and we got caught.

As discussed above, many inmates also cited that the cause of being able to hold onto individualism and culture is due to the fact that staff treated them like human beings instead of just another number. This quote demonstrates that food can be used to shape the identities and control those of inmates.

Another factor to consider when assessing food as a method of control is that jail and prison are very different from one another. When first starting this research, the researcher believed that jail and prison food experiences would be comparable to one another. A vast majority of the current correctional food research highlights prison food while jail food is rarely mentioned, which is one of the reasons that jails were the facilities chosen for this study. Even though jails were the focus of this study there were inmates that were interviewed that had also spent time in prison and could talk about their experiences with food while in prison. The results from this analysis indicated that it is clear that the experiences that inmates have with prison and jail food are sometimes very different.

Most of the inmates stated that the jail food they are served is much better in terms of amount and taste, though one inmate differed in his accounts from the others by stating that he believed that the food in prison is much better in regards to amount of vegetables and variety of meats. Some inmates also reported that those in isolation in prison are likely to receive some sort of altered food, whether it be Nutraloaf, grue, slop, a vegetable plate, or a plate with a small amount. This difference of opinion can possibly be due to the fact that there are very few correctional food guidelines so the food served at every facility can be different in terms of amount, quality, and safety.

It was also reported that the rules in regards to food in prison are more stringent than in the jails visited. Inmates smuggling food from the kitchen to their cells in order to sell it was mentioned by multiple inmates, and this type of behavior is known to be punished. When correctional officers were interviewed and asked about punishments for breaking food rules (of which there are virtually none), there were no guidelines for punishing these sort of actions, and many struggled to come up with examples of this kind of behavior.

# CHAPTER VI – CONCLUSION AND PROPOSED MODEL

The primary hypothesis that food is a contested space for control in the correctional system was supported by the data collected during this research, but was contrary to the original hypothesis. The literature suggested there would be direct and purposeful uses of food as control from this sample. The analyses of the data collected for this study suggest that use of food as control is much more indirect. These results indicate inmates are not thinking of ways to undermine correctional control and staff, but are simply trying to improve their situations any way they can. This is also true for staff members survey because they were not purposefully trying to control inmates through food. Their decisions based on the food were reportedly budgetary in nature. It was also reported that officers often help inmates create a variety in their food by helping them heat noodles or microwave other commissary items. The correctional staff who participated in this study seemed to want what was best for inmate's food consumption.

The use of food in these facilities was found to be overall positive. Inmates form relationships with other inmates to cook, trade, and share food in order to create a variety, while correctional staff use the little power they have to help inmates prepare food or provide the best food they can for the price. Any negative effects from food seem to be indirect.

While speaking with inmates and staff members, many of them reported that they do not use food as a method control, but these same people also reported things like making their own food, forming relationships, and refusing to eat the meals served. These participants did not view these actions as methods of control, but mentioned adding variety and choice as motives for doing so. These inmates are trying to have some control

over their situation, but do not think of this as taking control away from the correctional system even though that is what is happening. Similarly, correctional staff reported that these actions by inmates do not make them feel as though they have any less control, but in reality these actions do take some control away from the correctional system. The less control the inmates have the more control the correctional system has and vice versa. These two parties cannot be completely in control at the same time since inmates are the subjects of control in the culture of control espoused by the correctional system (Garland, 2001).

Even though food can be used by correctional staff to control inmates, all staff reported that they were against food as punishment and that their facilities did not alter food in any way as a form of punishment. Conversely, correctional staff stated that they believed that the inmates should not have too much choice and too many rights when it comes to the food served because part of being incarcerated is a lack of choice and personal freedoms. They also believed providing inmates with more food choices would not be feasible. This somewhat contradicts the model presented above, but can still be considered indirect to an extent because correctional staff did not recognize this as a method of control in the interviews. This also demonstrates that staff, just like inmates, do not fully understand their role of using food as a method of control even though it is occurring.

Inmates and staff both use food as a method of control for their own purposes, and both use food in order to influence inmate identity (as shown in Figure 1). Inmates use it to add variety and amount of food to their meals, to form relationships with other inmates, and to hold onto their sense of self. Staff use their control in order to stay under

budget and make their jobs easier by not having too many options for inmates to pick from, which influences inmate identity by limiting food choices.

This dynamic may be totally different in a prison setting. Since inmates are incarcerated for much longer in prison it makes sense that it would be more important for them to feel in control. Going without food that you like for a couple months is very different from going without it for years or a lifetime. Correctional officers are also responsible for a larger number of inmates in prison and some of the inmates may seem to be more dangerous, which could cause correctional officers to feel like having control is more important. Because it is difficult to supervise a larger number of inmates, correctional officers may be more sensitive about inmates having some control over them, even if it is food-related.

Food is not only used to create variety and choice for inmates, but in some cases it has been used as a weapon or means for rioting (Camplin, 2017). One staff participant reported that inmates used a plastic eating utensil to escape the jail my jamming the door, which indicates that the control gained by using food and food-related items is not necessarily harmless to staff.

## Policy Implications

The results of this research can be used in order to change different aspects of correctional food whether it be food guidelines, food service, preparation, or the food itself. If rehabilitation is the focus of correctional institutions then changes can be made in order to foster this goal. While conducting the interviews, some of the correctional staff members reported feeling as though inmates do not receive enough food. All staff members stated that the food met the guidelines, but some expressed that the inmates

need more. A vast majority of inmates also expressed that they need more food. Amount was the biggest complaint among inmates in the interviews and staff members said that this is also the biggest complaint they hear from inmates.

A lack of food or inadequate food can also lead to poor nutrition, which has been linked to poor concentration and cognitive performance (Burrow et al., 2017; Correa-Burrows et al., 2016; Gao et al., 2009). This means that if inmates are participating in programming such as religious services or educational or vocational classes these inmates may not be devoting as much energy or brainpower needed to get the most out of this programming, which is often an expensive part of incarceration. In order for the government to get the most out of their money and for inmates to actually be making a change in their lives, a proper diet can be imperative to this process.

One way to provide inmates with fresher and more nutritious food is through garden programs. In facilities where there are garden programs in place, inmates plant and maintain gardens with fresh food that are used to feed the inmates at the facility. Not only does this programming give inmates something to do and care for while incarcerated, but many of the inmates interviewed expressed that they felt like they needed more time outdoors with green space. It would also provide more variety to their diet, which was another major complaint. Providing inmates with the tools to plant and harvest their own food may help them feel more like themselves and more in control over their food and situation. This would also cut down on costs of providing fresh food through a private company.

## Limitations

The analysis of the data collected for this project yielded interesting and useful results, but there are some aspects of this study that could be improved with more time and resources. In order to get a broader scope of food in the correctional system, it would be ideal to collect data from inmates and staff in different kinds of correctional facilities from all around the United States. If there was more information about inmate and staff perception from jails, prisons, and other types of correctional and holding facilities, the results from that research would be much more representative and generalizable. This study only included three county jails in very close proximity to one another.

Not only were the facilities in the same area, but each facility had similar methods for serving inmates. Each facility served meals to inmates in their cellblocks. Other facilities have cafeterias in which inmates leave their cells and come to a communal eating space with inmates from other parts of the facility. Sampling facilities with different types of serving methods would allow the researcher to capture another part of food as a contested space for control.

The facilities sampled also did not fully represent the different types of food service available to correctional facilities. All three facilities used private companies in order to prepare the food served to inmates. Two of the facilities used local restaurants for each meal, while the other used a correctional food service. Inmates were not involved in food preparation at any of the facilities. Aramark, the most popular private food contractor, did not service any of the sampled facilities.

The population of the jails in the sample was also very homogenous. A majority of the participants were white and there were no immigrants in the sample. A sample that

includes more facilities with a larger population would be more likely to include more minorities and immigrants, which were of particular interest in this project. Those with cultural backgrounds not similar to white Americans may have very different opinions about the food served in correctional facilities and may be more likely to feel a loss of identity and culture since correctional food is known to cater to the masses by making it bland and generic.

Women were also poorly represented in the sample population. This is understandable because men make up a vast majority of those incarcerated (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2019), but a female perspective of control in the correctional system may vary greatly from male accounts. In general, women have different experiences of the world compared to men because of gender discrimination and different life circumstances. It is likely that women feel like they have less control over their lives than men do, and this may be reflected in the correctional system as well. There were also no minority female inmate participants, so there was no information about this population.

Information about the perception of violent offenders is also lacking in this project's data. One of the more prominent limitations of this research is that there were probably few violent offenders were surveyed and interviewed. There were questions about past crimes, but one jail administrator explained to me that it would be difficult for me to survey and interview the inmates held for violent crimes. The jail administrators were informed that all inmates that wanted to participate should be permitted to, but there were certain protocols that made it difficult to interact with violent offenders. Because of this, very few violent offenders were brought to the rooms where surveys and interviews were being conducted. This population would have provided insightful information on

how food can be used to punish and control violent offenders that are probably more likely to receive harsher punishments and be put into isolation.

Not only were there problems surveying and interviewing those that may have wanted to participate, but there were many inmates that did not want to participate even though they were permitted. One of the reasons for this may be that at one of the facilities the inmates that participated had to be strip-searched after leaving the room used for data collection. This may have dissuaded some potential participants. There were low response rates at the other facilities sampled as well, even though the inmates did not have to strip-searched following the data collection, so there may have been other reasons why inmates did not want to participate.

There were also low response rates from correctional staff. Some of the reasons for this could be that the researcher only had access to officers on duty during data collection and these staff members were busy with their work duties. Also, the facilities chosen for data collection had few staff members.

Another challenging point of this research is the fact that some questions were difficult for inmates to understand. Whether it was because of a lack of familiarity with correctional issues, a lack of formal education, or poorly-worded questioning (or a combination of these factors) there were many inmates that did not understand the questions posed to them. Questions relating to identity and culture seemed to be the most difficult, but some inmates also misunderstood what Nutraloaf was. Even with rewording, these questions seemed to be hard to follow and yielded answers that were also difficult to understand. Using questions that are clearer with better examples is imperative to future research on this topic.

Some inmates had no problems understanding the questions, but reported having mental health issues that they have dealt with through their lifetime, which is not surprising since many people end up in incarceration when they actually need mental health treatment (Raphael & Stoll, 2013). These participants are important in this research because they represent another segment of the population in incarceration, but they also may act as outliers from other inmates because their experiences may be in part based off of their experiences through untreated mental illness instead of the control measures that are actually present. They also may experience different elements of food control that are not common for the general jail population. One correctional staff member reported that he had crushed an inmate's medicine up in his food because he had a severe mental illness and refused to take his medicine. This shows how correctional staff can directly control parts of an inmate's mental well-being by using food to manipulate him or her into taking his or her medication, even if it is seen as being for the inmate's "own good."

## Future Research

Research that further assesses the dynamic of contested space for control is needed in order to understand how inmate control levels are related to rehabilitation. This study provides support for the hypothesis that food is a contested space for control, but it did not study how inmates feel about their level of control and how it can either help or hinder rehabilitation. If it is found that higher levels of inmate control yield better rehabilitation results, food could then be used to justify this effort.

Future research efforts should focus on mitigating these limitations. A study with a broader scope that has access to every type of correctional facility with various different

ownership (public and private) would be much more representative. In an ideal situation, every inmate in every facility would be surveyed and interviewed. Because this is not feasible, a study with a sample population that includes private and public jails, prisons, and immigration holding facilities should be conducted. Correctional staff should also be a more important part of data collection and analysis.

Once there is a better understanding of food as a contested space for control in the United States correctional system, future research should include a comparative study that analyzes international correctional systems in relation to the correctional system in the United States. With this information about inmate experience, it would be possible to create a best practices model for food served in correctional facilities that has an international scope in order to promulgate a correctional environment that is conducive to rehabilitation.

This study was conducted to understand how food is used as a method of control in southern Mississippi jails so that in the future a best practices model can be created for correctional food. After collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, it was found that food is a contested space for control, but its effects on control are primarily indirect.

This analysis found that inmates use food in order to add variety to their diets and to improve their situation in incarceration and correctional staff and the system use food as another budgetary constraint that lets inmates know they have a loss of personal freedom and that they are one of many. This study also demonstrated that food plays a critical role in the quality of life in jails and serves to expand on the scant research in this important area of correctional management.

APPENDIX A – Facility Letter Example

Dear Correctional Administrator:

My name is Zoe Livengood and I am a graduate student at the University of Southern Mississippi studying Criminal Justice. During my time at USM, I have worked on various projects such as a white paper for the Mississippi Department of Corrections, a book titled *Marijuana 360*, mass shooting research, a textbook that details the history of the criminal justice system in Mississippi, and I have written a book review that is currently being published by *Criminal Justice Review*.

I am currently beginning work on my thesis regarding the role of food in the correctional system, specifically prisons and jails, under the direction of Drs. Johnson, Hill, Gulledge, and Lemacks from the University of Southern Mississippi. In order to study this topic, I would like to survey and interview correctional staff and inmates at different facilities in order to examine their perceptions of food served at the facility. Access to your facility and others like it is imperative to my study and would help further the sparse research that currently exists in this area relating to inmate identity, security, and other corrections topics. The data collected from this study will be aggregated and no specific facility will be referenced in the thesis or other published work. I will also create an executive summary of the results and disseminate it to all the administrators that choose to participate. If you would be willing to have your facility participate or if you have any questions, my contact information is listed below.

Best regards,

Zoe K. Livengood
Email: zoe.livengood@usm.edu
Phone: (740) 601-2206
Mailing address: 118 College Drive Box 5127 Hattiesburg, MS 39406

# APPENDIX B – IRB Acceptance Letter

THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**
118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board

**NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION**

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
  Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 18080603
PROJECT TITLE: What's Cookin'?: An Analysis of Food as Method of Control in the Penal System
PROJECT TYPE: Master's Thesis
RESEARCHER(S): Zoe Livengood
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Arts and Sciences
SCHOOL: Criminal Justice
FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Full Committee Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 10/15/2018 to 10/15/2019

**Edward L. Goshorn, Ph.D.**
**Institutional Review Board**

APPENDIX C – Staff Survey

FOOD IN THE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM
STAFF SURVEY

**Using the scale below, please circle the number that most closely reflects your feelings about the statement since entering the facility.**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | The food served in this facility meets dietary needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | The food served in this facility meets the health and safety regulations of the state and this facility. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | The inmates often complain about the food. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | Food is sometimes used as a punishment in your facility. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | Inmates have a say in the food they receive. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | I would/do eat the food served to inmates. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | The food choices available in this facility are diverse. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | Inmates are caught taking food out of the cafeteria or kitchen. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | The food prepared in this facility is provided by a private company. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | Staff oversee food preparation and service. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | Food is prepared and brought in from somewhere else. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | Food is used independently as a punishment in this facility. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | Sometimes I assert my authority over inmates using food. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

14. If applicable, when/if inmates smuggle food from the kitchen or dining hall, it makes me feel like I have less control over them. 1 2 3 4 5

15. What company is responsible for food supply or preparation (if applicable)?
    a) Aramark
    b) Canteen Services, Inc.
    c) Trinity Services Group
    d) Other: _____

16. How many years have you worked in a correctional facility? - _____

17. Gender (Circle one): Male/Female

18. Age: _____

19. Which of the following do you identify with as your race/ethnicity (Circle all that apply):
    a. White/Caucasian
    b. African-American
    c. Hispanic
    d. Asian
    e. Native American
    f. Other

APPENDIX D – Staff Interview

FOOD IN THE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM
GUIDED STAFF INTERVIEW

1. What are your overall thoughts about the food served in this facility (safety, type of food, preparation, etc.)?

2. How would you describe the regulations (safety and nutritional) related to the food served in this facility (if known)?

3. Is the food service contracted out? Do inmates prepare the food or does a private company prepare it and bring it in? Please explain.

4. How often does the menu rotate? How long do inmates get to eat each meal?

5. Have you noticed any relation between the food served and inmate behavior? Please explain.

6. Are inmates caught smuggling food back to their cells? If so, what are the punishments associated with that? What do the inmates do with the smuggled food (form cooking groups, eat it on their own, etc.)? If so, does this make you feel like you have less control over them and why?

7. Do inmates often complain about the food? If so, what are some of the common complaints that you hear? If applicable, What do you think about their complaints

8. Do you believe that food is ever used as a punishment in your facility? If so, how? Do you believe that food *should* be used as a punishment against inmates? Why or why not?

9. Have you ever felt bad about altering an inmate's food (if applicable)? Please explain.

10. Do you feel that inmates have rights and freedoms in regards to food? Is there anything you would change when it comes to food served and available to inmates?

11. Do you believe that food is used to control inmates? Do you assert your authority over inmates using food? Do you believe that food can be used for security purposes? Please explain.

12. Does your facility use Nutraloaf (food brick, mashed food that has been baked in order to be flavorless and have an unappealing texture)?

13. If applicable, is Nutraloaf used on its own for disciplinary infractions, or is it always accompanied by another punishment?

APPENDIX E – Inmate Survey

FOOD IN THE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM
INMATE SURVEY

**Using the scale below, please circle the number that most closely reflects your feelings about the statement since entering the facility.**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The food I receive while incarcerated meets my dietary needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I enjoy eating the food I am served while incarcerated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I get a say in what I eat while incarcerated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. The food I am served is prepared properly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The food I am served is safe to eat. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. After eating a meal, I am full. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I am often hungry between meals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I trade food with other inmates. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. If applicable, when I trade food for other items with inmates I feel like I have control over those inmates. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Sometimes I refuse to eat the food served to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I make my own food in my cell. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I make food with other inmates (not in the kitchen). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. If applicable, when I make my own food and/or buy food from commissary, I feel more in control. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. I hide food in my cell that I'm not supposed to have. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. If applicable, when I hide food from staff I feel like I'm in control. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. My family and/or friends send me money for commissary items. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I eat snacks from commissary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. When I eat certain foods I feel more like myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Food served at this facility reflects my upbringing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I recognize food at this facility from my life outside. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. The food served here is normal to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. Sometimes I think about and crave foods from the outside. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. I feel like I'm being punished when I'm served foods I don't like. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. I see the food served in this facility as being part of my punishment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. I feel that correctional staff has too much control over what I eat. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. Correctional staff use food to punish me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. When I receive a disciplinary infraction, the food I receive is altered in some way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. The food has changed since I've been incarcerated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. I am healthier since being incarcerated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

30. I have gained weight since being incarcerated. 1 2 3 4 5

31. How long have you been at this facility? _____

32. How many facilities have you been incarcerated in? _____

33. How much time have you spent incarceration throughout your life?_____

34. Are you an immigrant? (Circle one): Yes/No

35. If you answered yes, how long have you lived in the United States? _____

36. Gender (Circle one): Male/Female

37. Age: _____

38. Do you currently or have you previously worked in food preparation at your facility (Circle one)? Yes/No

39. Which of the following do you identify with as your race/ethnicity (Circle all that apply):

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| a. White/Caucasian | c. Hispanic | e. Native American |
| b. African-American | d. Asian | f. Other: _____ |

APPENDIX F – Inmate Interview

FOOD IN THE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM
GUIDED INMATE INTERVIEW

1. What are your overall feelings about the food served in your facility?

2. Do you feel like an individual while incarcerated, or just another inmate (do you feel as if you can be yourself)? Please explain.

3. Have you been able to hold onto your cultural identity since being incarcerated? If so, how?

4. Does the food at this facility reflect your cultural upbringing? Please explain.

5. How has your health (weight, energy levels, etc.) changed since you've been incarcerated? Please explain.

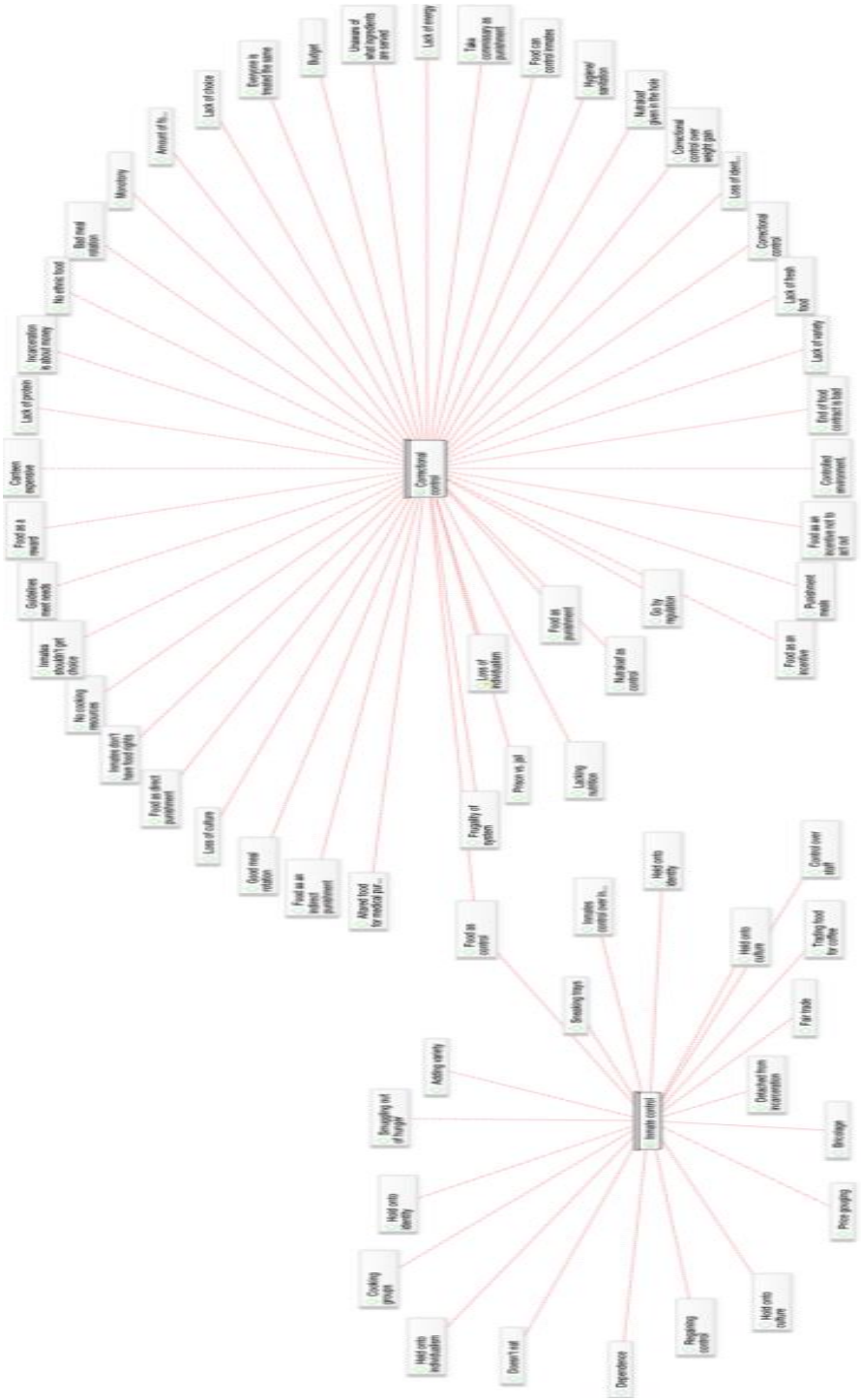
6. Do you believe that food is ever used as punishment in your facility (Nutraloaf)? Please explain.

7. Do you think that some of the punishments here are worse than others? Which is the worst? Why?

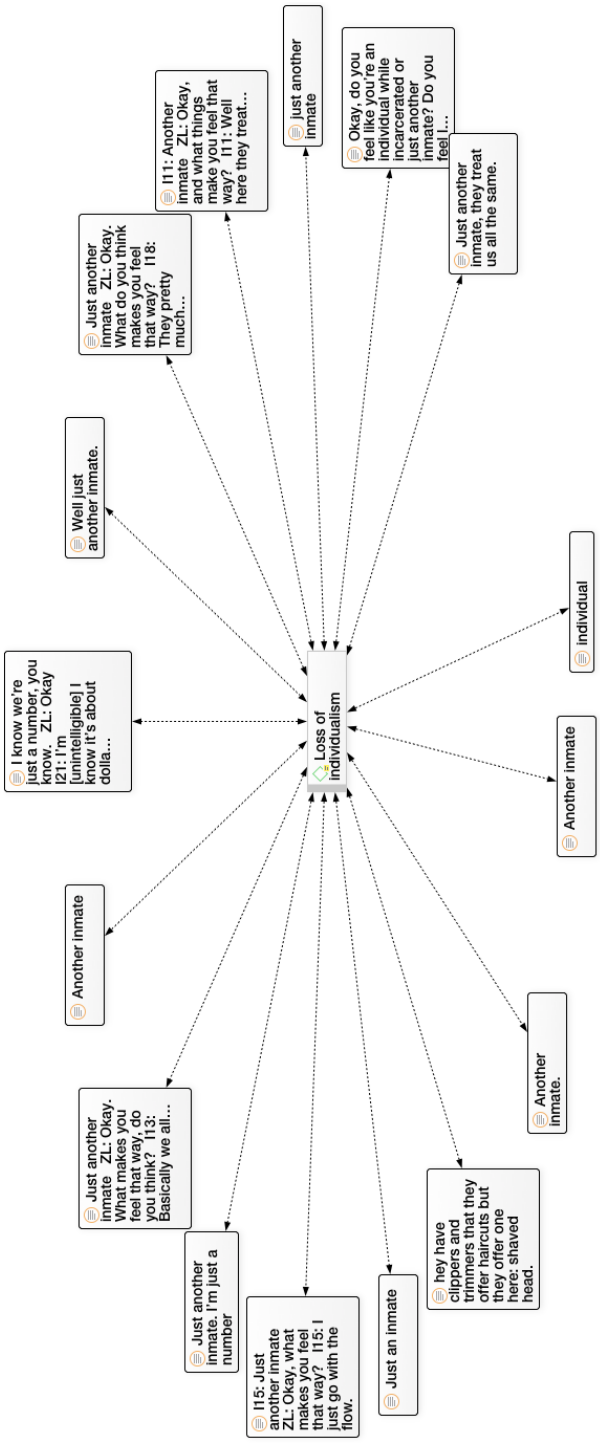
8. Can food be used as currency in your facility? If so, how? Do you think food as currency gives some inmates control over other inmates?

9. Do inmates smuggle food back to their cells from the dining or kitchen areas? Are there cooking groups in your facility? Do you feel like this gives you some control over the correctional officers and staff?

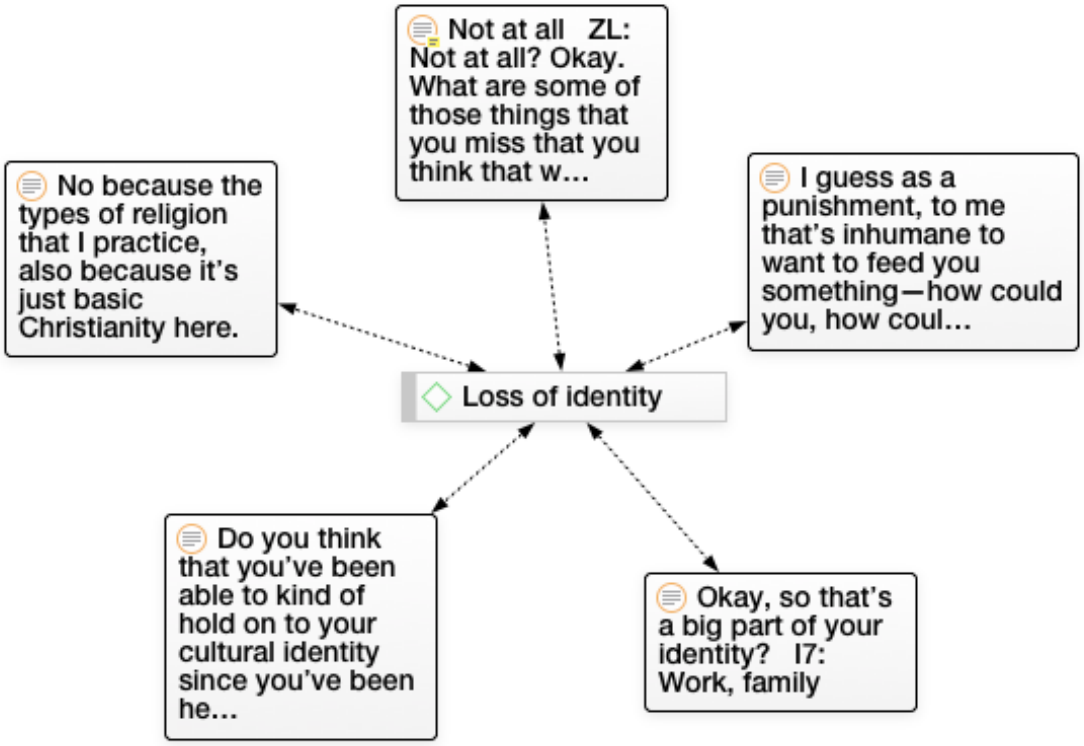
APPENDIX G – Inmate and Correctional Control ATLAS.ti Network



APPENDIX H – Loss of Individualism ATLAS.ti Network



APPENDIX I – Loss of Identity ATLAS.ti Network



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